# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
OR
# THE DUTIES OF PARENTS

BECKER

Wm. L. Quatman
1914

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WITHDRAWN

# Christian Education,

OR

# The Duties of Parents.

BY

The Rev. William Becker, S.J.

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(Rendered from the German into English by a Priest of the Diocese of Cleveland.)

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## PREFATORY REMARKS.

The following pages are a translation of a book of German sermons on Christian Education issued by the Rev. William Becker, S. J., in the spring of 1893.

The importance and excellence of the learned Jesuit's discourses are such as to require no apology for their appearance in an English dress. The first edition of this little book in its original language met with such a favorable reception both in the new and the old world, that the author judged it advisable to get out a second edition. Of this the present publication is a translation.

In a preface to the second edition of his sermons in German Father Becker makes a few remarks which it may be well to reproduce here in English. He says: "The book notices, coming as they did from experienced men and educators, have been, in the first place, an encouragement to me to get out a second edition. Furthermore, I considered them to be a hint to exercise prudent moderation in making corrections and additions. Slight alterations as to style and the choice of certain words, naturally suggested themselves. However, I thought that I ought not to dilute and weaken too much what a certain reviewer was pleased to call 'an occasional highly drastic manner of putting things.' A vigorous delineation, especially in popular discourses such as these are intended to be, is always preferable to a soft tiptoeing, the

more so, as the handling of some topics, with kid gloves, is altogether out of place.

"Another critic expressed the slight censure (and this is the only one I have been able to find in some twenty odd recensions), 'that a number of terms and expressions are not quite in keeping with the dignity of the pulpit,' and that 'in the presence of young men and maidens, who are supposed to hear the discourses, one or other passage might seem amiss.' With all due regard for oratorical decency, however, I have not, after the most scrupulous examination, been able to detect any such expressions or passages. Nevertheless, if anything in this line should be found, I shall be thankful for every definite disclosure. Father Schleininger says in his 'Bildung des jungen Redners' page 76: 'The acquisition of this quality of style (viz. vigor and strength) is important, more especially, for the popular speaker. The common people love a forceful language, just as they are fond of powerful colors. They are wont to express themselves in vigorous characteristic expressions, in pithy sayings and striking images. Anything that does not appear before their eyes with sharp delineations, whatever is devoid of life and energy, cannot fascinate, much less deeply impress them. Mere smoothness and polish, mere regularity of expression, or elegance of thought, are to them what a miniature painting is on the lofty ceiling of a church edifice.'

"It has been stated, and quite truthfully, by some of the reviews published in Germany, 'that the discourses are adapted pre-eminently to North

American conditions'; but they also add immediately: 'The principles set forth remain identical everywhere, and even their application to various regions does not diverge so widely, that one could not make use of the present publication without great profit.' Naturally I had to address myself directly to the hearers I actually had before me. Such is one of the first rules of rhetoric.

"I myself have been occupied in various places and positions mostly with the education of youth. Thus I spent eleven years in Germany, from 1859 to 1870. After a similar, but considerably longer, employment as educator in the New World, I gained the experience, that the 'Tout comme chez nous'' was grounded on truth, even as to the education of children, and more especially, as regards the usual faults committed therein.'

Even a cursory perusal of the following discourses will show that they are remarkable especially for "logical disposition, simple presentation, concise and, withal, comprehensive form" as the critique of the vast majority of the reviewers informs the public.

In conclusion it may be well to state, that all profits and emoluments of the English translation shall be devoted towards scholarship purposes at St. Ignatius College in Cleveland for the diffusion of genuine Christian education among talented young men.

THE TRANSLATOR.

# TO THE MEMORY

OF

**The deceased Bishops of the Diocese of Cleveland, the Rt. Revs. Amadeus Rappe and Richard Gilmour, who, for upwards of forty years, labored zealously and fought bravely and successfully for the noble cause of Christian Education within the portion of the Lord's vineyard assigned to their charge, this volume**

**is affectionately inscribed**

**by the**

**TRANSLATOR.**

## PREFACE.

Much has been said and written on the education of children, or what amounts to the same thing — the duties of parents. This naturally follows from a conviction of the *importance* and *difficulty* of the subject. For, all who in any way take part in the struggle between good and evil, belief and unbelief, Christ and Antichrist, say with one accord, "Give us the children, the rising generation, and the future is ours." And, ever since the days of antiquity, education is considered the *most difficult* of all arts. But, what in an especial manner must sadden the heart of every sincere friend of the little ones, is the fact, that their education is often sorely neglected by parents, who are the first God-appointed teachers and educators, — yea, neglected and spoiled to such a degree, that the subsequent effort, which the Church, in virtue of her Christ-given mission to teach all mankind, makes in behalf of these little ones, can become only partially successful, if it does not prove altogether fruitless. To be sure, the fault on the part of the parents is not always intentional. Though they make many a mistake and neglect their educational duties, they do not *mean* to bring up their children badly and thus fail to educate them. They simply do not know any better, and in the treatment of their offspring commit a thousand deplorable

blunders. At all events, pastors, whose efforts in behalf of the welfare of the children are in vain without parental co-operation, must consider it an important part of their ministry, to admonish and urge parents again and again to fulfil their obligations towards their offspring. They must show, even as to detail, wherein properly the Christian educational art consists, — what results are to be obtained by it, and what errors to be avoided.

To do this, was the object I had in view when delivering the following sermons in St. Mary's church, Cleveland, Ohio. For the same purpose, also, I now publish them, especially upon the advice of several of my confrères, who either heard or read of them. In the present edition, however, I have withheld a few of the sermons actually delivered, as they treated questions and conditions of only local importance. I thought it more conducive to general utility, to emphasize only such principles as are universal and obtain everywhere, so that from them practical deductions, suitable for particular places, countries and times, might be easily drawn. Simply and plainly, without lumbering erudition, — in clear catechetical form, have I endeavored to cover the entire ground of education, or the care of parents for the temporal and spiritual welfare of their children. The order of observations to be made and the instructions to be given, spontaneously flowed from the nature and destiny of the child, who, according to the design of Our Heavenly Father, is in the first place to become a good, useful member of human society. How parents, as the visible representatives of God,

are to discharge their duties in this regard, is shown in the contents of the first eight sermons.

But the main part concerns the *Hereafter.* Children — their immortal souls — come from Heaven, and, through the preparatory pilgrimage of terrestrial life, are to return to Heaven. To effect this return, parents, like visible guardian angels, should be at their side and assist them. If they wish to do this successfully, they have a fourfold task to accomplish. They must,

1. introduce their children into the *Christian religion*, as this is the only way that leads us human beings to Heaven (Sermon 9–14). They must,

2. by *careful watchfulness* preserve their children from the byways of error and sin (Sermon 15–23).

3. In case of necessity, also a *judicious punishment* inflicted upon the young, must serve to check and urge them forward on the path that leads to Heaven (Sermon 24–27).

4. Lastly, *the good example* which parents set their children, must draw them heavenward (Sermon 28–32).

The recollection of temporal and eternal happiness or misery — which latter are the fruits of a good or evil education both for children and parents,—spurs these on to a faithful discharge of the numerous duties which the fourfold parental task entails (Sermon 33).

I trust that these catechetical sermons will furnish my reverend confrères the necessary and desired matter, whenever they wish to speak on particular points of education, or to preach in connected series on this most difficult and essential

parental duty. An attentive perusal of these sermons, too, might give parents who are able to read, some useful hints how to avoid many a mistake in the discharge of the difficult art of educating their little ones, to always find the right means, and, especially, ever to imbibe fresh courage and new strength for a perfect consecration of themselves to the chief task of their life, the education of their children, who, however, are still more the children of God.

May the Divine Lover of the little ones and His Heavenly Mother bless this humble labor, which I have undertaken and carried out solely in their honor and for the best interests of those whom they especially love, viz.—children and parents.

Cleveland, Ohio, St. Ignatius College, May 11th, Feast of St. Francis de Hieronymo, 1893.

The Author.

## 1. The Dignity of Parents as God's Representatives.

Qui timet Deum, honorat parentes.
Eccli. 3, 8.

"He that feareth the Lord, honoreth his parents."

In the holy and sweet Name of Jesus, from Whom every blessing and benediction for each and every undertaking must be expected, we shall begin to-day a series of sermons on education. Parents and children, young men and maidens, every condition of age, will find therein an opportunity for further self-instruction as to the most important duties of their life, — duties, from the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of which depends weal or woe in time and eternity, for individuals, the family, and the community at large. Much is usually discussed and written about different schemes to render mankind happy. The only true, solid and efficacious system to insure happiness, is this: "Parents, give your children a good, Christian education! You, children, accept this education with cheerful and willing hearts! You, sons and daughters, prepare to be Christian educators, in case God should call you to such a state of life." If this admonition were universally followed, if this system were carried out generally: then all men, however varied their circumstances, might be, would be happy.

In order to give our series of sermons on education a safe and firm basis, let us to-day briefly consider:

1. the dignity of parents;

2. some conclusions drawn from this dignity both for children and parents.

1. The inconceivably high dignity of parents consists in this, that with regard to their children they are the proximate and direct representatives of the three persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

Emperors and kings, sovereigns and presidents of the world, at no small expense, keep at the courts of the various countries and empires so-called ambassadors. These are their representatives who mediate business and negotiate commissions for their lords and demand for themselves the same honors as their sovereign would claim, if he were present in person.

In a far higher sense are parents the representatives of the Living God, the King of kings.

The parental state was instituted by Almighty God together with matrimony, and through it, already in paradise. The parental state, therefore, constitutes the most ancient nobility which exists, whose patent has been issued by the hand of God Himself. It was not His design to form all human beings singly, as He did in the case of Adam and Eve; otherwise they would have been placed beside one another as independent individuals. They were to constitute one harmonious whole, one family, and as such should people the earth and prepare themselves for Heaven by mutual assistance. The natural descent of children from parents,

governed and regulated according to the laws which God's power and wisdom gave to the parental nature, should be the means of the propagation which He designed. The parental state, therefore, comes directly from God, and is as old as the human race. Does not this origin, this antiquity alone render it venerable?

And the more so, when we reflect that parents in their condition of life are the *immediate* representatives of God. Ultimately, of course, the Father who is in heaven, is our creator and preserver. In this sense the words of Christ are to be taken (Matth. 23, 9): "One is your father who is in heaven." But through whom does He give to the child corporal substance and formation, in order to unite with this figure of clay a soul created by His divine breath? Through whom, in a word, does He introduce the child into this world—into the society of mankind? He does this *through the agency of its parents.* They are the instruments, the representatives of His omnipotent, creative power. And when, for the first time, they hear from the lips of the child the tender names of "father" — "mother," a sentiment of holy pride and sweet joy must thrill their hearts at the reflection, that the Heavenly Father, from Whom all fatherhood comes, has made them the parents of the child.

And now what, if we consider the *preservation* of the child? No living being stands, for so long a time and to such a degree, in need of the help and assistance of others for nourishment and preservation of life, as a new-born babe. Reflect and cal-

culate, my dear parents: how much, not to mention the costs in cases of sickness, did you have to provide for habitation, board and clothing of your children from their birth to their 12th, 14th or 16th year? Some time ago I asked in school a little boy of ten years, about how much he cost his parents annually. He thought, at least one hundred dollars a year; therefore, said I, he cost his parents in ten years already a thousand dollars, and, consequently, was quite an expensive boy. Now who provided these 100, these 1000 dollars? In the last instance, the Heavenly Father, from whom all good comes, who clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the birds of the air. For He it is who preserves you, parents, in health and provides the opportunity for work and wages. He it is above all, who instils into your hearts that *unflagging, inexhaustible love*, which allows you neither rest nor respite as long as you are able to move hand or foot, and fills you with courage and perseverance at the thought that it is for your children!—for your children! And from this the dignity of your station is apparent. If a king were to adopt a little child, that child in its outward appearance would be a prince,—though in fact it be only an adopted child. Your children, however, are your real children, and, at the same time, the children of the King of kings. In His Name, as His immediate representatives, you shall nourish, clothe and educate them.

This dignity is increased and receives a divine, supernatural character of nobility through this, that you are not only the direct representatives of God the Father for the natural, temporal life; but that

also, as to the supernatural, heavenly life, you take the place of Christ Jesus and the Holy Ghost in regard to your little ones. For, as you know, your children, conceived and born in sin, can obtain the grace of redemption from sin, and that sanctification so indispensable to a return into heaven, only through Christ and the Holy Ghost. Now, it is true, the infinite love of Jesus Christ has entrusted the dispensation of these graces of redemption and sanctification to His Church. She, as your mother and the mother of your children, stands far above you, who are the parents according to the body. Her right to your children and her obligations to them stand as high above your rights and duties as grace is exalted above nature. The Church exercises both, or, at least, endeavors to exercise them, through her ministers, the priests. You acknowledge and confess this when you greet the priest with the beautiful name of "father." For the priests are in truth your and your children's father. This is the fruitful blessing of holy virginity to which your priests, out of love of Jesus, out of love of yourselves and your children, bind themselves by a strict vow. Free from all earthly, natural family cares, they willingly and cheerfully sacrifice their life to insure by their mediation the supernatural, heavenly life for yourselves and your children. If all Christians, all Catholics considered attentively this position of the Church and their priests, they would show them a totally different respect from what, in their shallow worldly-mindedness, they but too frequently manifest both by word and deed.

But with what right and in what sense, — presupposing the position and task of the Church and her priests as intimated a moment ago—can we call parents the representatives of Christ and the Holy Ghost? Inasmuch as parents bring their children under the influence of the Church and her priests, and because they must, day after day, prepare for, support and promote all the painstaking labors, which the church, the school and the priests perform in behalf of their children. With these words I intimate a wide field for our prospective meditations. To-day, however, the mere pointing out of this wide field for parental solicitude must suffice to draw this conclusion, to wit: If parents desire to be to their children not merely bodily, but Christian parents, they must, as representatives of Christ and the Holy Ghost and as co-operators of the Church and her ministers, *take pains to save and sanctify their children.* Parents can easily spoil and render void all efforts of church and priest. They can also assist the cares and labors of the church, her priests and the Christian school so efficaciously, as to secure a happy result, I mean, the true happiness of children in time and eternity.

O Christian parents, how exalted, how sublime is your position! "Let us now praise men of renown," exclaims Jesus, the son of Sirach (44, 1). And who are they? "Let us praise our parents" he continues immediately, and then mentions no one else. What is the ambassador of the emperor of Germany, Austria, China in Washington? The representative of an earthly ruler, who himself is little more than a handful of dust and ashes. I see

there in a miserable mud cabin a poor day laborer and his wife, surrounded by a circle of children. What are father, mother, provided they know how to appreciate their position as parents and faithfully fulfil the duties thereof? They are ambassadors, immediate representatives of the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

2. And now you, O children, large and small, young and old, do you understand the admonition of the Holy Ghost: "He that feareth the Lord, honoreth his parents?" The fear of God and the honor of parents stand on the same plane. The fear of God is the cause or motive; the honor for one's parents the effect, and that, a *necessary* effect. No wonder: your parents are to you the direct representatives of God. Behind them, yes in their very midst, opposite to you rises up the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Maybe—and, alas, it is but too often the case—, that your parents before your very eyes become guilty of faults, even sins and crimes; yet, they are and remain the representatives of God. The sun remains in the depth of the sky and shines and diffuses warmth, although dark clouds hide it from the sight of mortal men. Wherefore, you must honor your parents, if you fear God, the terrible God, who rises up before you in your parents. If you do not honor your parents (and honor includes love and obedience), you have no fear of God. But now *the fear of God* is *the beginning of wisdom* (Ps. 110, 10). Wherefore, if you do not honor your parents, you do not possess even the beginning of wisdom. In other words—and I will be candid

and say it to you publicly; you cannot blame me, as it is from a motive of sheer love for you that I say it—: If *you do not honor* and respect your parents, then you are unwise and guilty of great folly and stupidity, even though, in a worldly sense, you might be a marvel of learning. The relation between you and your parents is no merely external or accidental one. It is designed and fixed by Almighty God. It is written into your very flesh and blood. You act directly against the law of nature when you ignore this relation and its demands. In order to remove absolutely every doubt from your mind, God, who gave you your parents, did not do as Solon, the law-giver of Athens. This man, in a written collection of laws, which he had been commissioned to draw up for the people of Athens, adopted no law, no commandment for—children. Being asked, if he had forgotten the children and the duties they have, he replied: "Not at all. The Creator has written the duties of children into their flesh and blood,—into their very hearts. Wherefore, they need no laws drafted on scrolls of paper!" The all-wise God understood corrupt human nature better than Solon. Hence He says to all children in the commandment, which stands at the top of the second tablet and which alone of all ten precepts contains the promise of blessing and, therefore, indirectly also the threat of a curse: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayst be long-lived upon the land which the Lord thy God will give thee" (Exodus 20, 12). What do you wish, what do you desire, you both, little and grown-up children? Assuredly, that it

may fare well with you, that you attain a long life, and that you may be happy for your whole lifetime. But can you do so without God's blessing? Never! And will you not most certainly and without fail become unhappy, if you as children call down upon you God's malediction? Wherefore, judge for yourselves, O children, when your actions are imprudent and foolish, and when they are reasonable and wise.

As to you, dear parents, but one word more. Every dignity is a burden. Proportionate to the high dignity of your station are the duties which it entails upon you. All the particular obligations, as we shall review them, are contained in this one sentence: You are and shall be unto your children representatives of the Persons of the Most Adorable Trinity. Solely for this did God call you to the parental state and give you children, that you do to them what the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity desire to be done in their behalf. This is your life's mission. Your entire life, with all its thoughts and endeavors, must be devoted to a successful solution of this question. When your hour of death shall arrive, the Triune God will put, above all, two questions to you, from the solution of which life or death, heaven or hell in your case shall principally depend. And which are these two questions?

The first will be: How have you prepared yourselves for the parental state and its obligations? To educate children, to insure their happiness in time and eternity, is the most difficult of all arts and one you will not learn in a day. The sacrament of matrimony, it is true, gives rich graces also for

this kind of parental duties; but grace presupposes preparation. Hence, this preparation by which one is rendered capable to educate, must be acquired beforehand in youth. Do our young people think of this? Do they, before and during the time of company-keeping, seek to acquire this qualification and to secure it as the most precious and most necessary dower? School-teachers, before they are intrusted with a school, must pass an examination, either in the presence of their superiors, or a special committee. Could the poor priest, during the examination before marriage, act as fain he would with regard to those who present themselves as candidates for the parental state, he should have to tell some: "You had better not get married. For, by remaining single, you may always as yet save your souls; but, once you are married and blessed with children, you will render unhappy and cast them and yourselves into perdition." However, it is not my intention to speak to-day to the unmarried young people. Parents, examine yourselves before God as to your sins of commission and omission anterior to your marriage. Repent and do penance for them. Thus, by making proper amends, you may yet meet the first question of the Judge successfully. The second question addressed to you will be: Have you fulfilled the obligations which I as Father, Redeemer and Sanctifier of your children, have imposed upon your conscience? Happy are you, O parents, if you can answer: "Triune, omniscient God! Thou art aware and knowest that we have committed many a fault against them. Yet with a good conscience we may say, our

endeavors, our thoughts and efforts were directed toward fulfilling your will." Then shall the Father, Son and the Holy Ghost say to you: "Well done! Not over a few things, but over so and so many immortal souls, whom I had confided to your care, have you been faithful—; enter into the joy of the Lord." Amen.

## 2. On the Care for the Life and Health of Children.

> Si quis suorum, et maxime domesticorum, curam non habet, fidem negavit, et est infideli deterior. I. Tim. 5, 8.
>
> "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

Great and exalted is the dignity of parents! The omnipotent, all-wise and triune God, has made them His representatives in regard to their children. Representing the Heavenly Father, who by a word of His omnipotence has called out of nothing the whole universe into existence, and, with the fingers of His right hand, balances it above the abyss of nothingness, they are the proximate cause of the earthly existence of their children, and, in continuing to care for them, they become their nourishers and preservers. But this natural existence is, as it were, only the foundation and prerequisite for the *supernatural* life, which the Son of God, as Redeemer, infuses into them, and the Holy Ghost develops to the highest degree of virtue and holiness. The instruments employed by the Son and the Holy Ghost to effect this supernatural influence over and in the soul of children are again — next

to the Church and her ministers — the parents. Oh, indeed, great and stupendous is the dignity of parents. Next to the priesthood of the Catholic church, whose full glory is resplendent in him, whom all Christians greet with the honorary title of 'Holy Father,' there is no dignity as exalted as that of parents. The vocation of kings, emperors, presidents, as such, is not as sublime as that of parents. The former have subjects, while the latter have children. The former, very often, are created, elected in one way or another, and, only subsequently, the necessary authority from heaven, from God, is conferred upon them; the latter are directly instituted by Almighty God and clad with the dignity of parents.

Great, therefore, is the *dignity*, great also is the *burden* laid on parents. If we begin with the consideration of this charge, *i. e.* of the duties, which the lofty state of parents imposes upon them, we might take immediately their threefold representation of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost as a basis and continue to build upon it. However, as the nearest point of view, from which all obligations can be better overlooked, let us choose that one, which arises from the twofold nature of the child and its twofold end or destination.

Recall to mind that happy moment, when the sponsors return from the baptismal font with the infant just baptized, and place it in your arms. At the time you could not but say: 'This our child was born, and is born again; born of us in sin, — born again of the Church, the divine Mother of the living, unto the life of grace.' Holding this child

in your arms and pressing it to your heart, you could not but exclaim with St. Chrysostom: 'How great, how precious a good has God intrusted to us! Let us guard it with exceeding great care!'

But to what should this care be extended?—Consider the tender, helpless infant, which God wholly and entirely made dependent upon you. It possesses a body and a soul, and, corresponding to these, has an earthly and a heavenly destination. It shall grow unto earth and heaven, shall become a useful member of human society, and a glorious associate of the heavenly host. This twofold end cannot be accomplished without you; it is possible, and can be attained only through you and through your constant aid and assistance. Hence, your duties are of a twofold nature; duties which regard the body and the soul, earth and heaven, time and eternity. God has placed you to the right and to the left of your child, in order that you, with the hand of a loving and solicitous father and mother, may lead it into time, into human society, and, through this, into eternity, into the home, where your Heavenly Father awaits you and your children, and where your children, for all eternity, will thank you as the authors of their existence and of their temporal and eternal bliss.

Now, if we begin with the temporal care, or the care for the body, your duties, in the first place, regard the *life* and *health* of your children. These, evidently, are for them the first and most necessary earthly goods, even on this account, that they are the prerequisite condition for all the rest. Now, of course ultimately, God in heaven is the

highest and independent Lord and the Giver of life and death. '*The Lord killeth and maketh alive*' (I. Kings, 2, 6). He can give, and take life and health; He is responsible to no one. Wherefore, He can permit the child to come into this world stillborn, or crippled, or diseased in body. In such cases people should be very much on their guard against expressing a rash judgment, such as, 'Parents are to be blamed for this,' or, 'That is a punishment of God on account of the parents.'

Such a rash judgment can easily constitute a mortal sin, and draw down upon itself a severe punishment. In particular cases, therefore, we all should repeat to ourselves in such like occurrences: "*Judge not, that you may not be judged*" (Matth. 7, 1.) At the same time, it remains for parents, when they meet with such sad accidents, to resign themselves to God's wise and holy Will and to examine as to whether, and by what, they may have occasioned or caused such misfortune. Maybe, by examining themselves, they can learn much for the future, and repent, atone and do penance for the past, in order to appease God and to allay His avenging justice.

For, more than parents may be aware of, life and health of their children depend upon themselves, and, indeed, directly

1. *upon the parents, even before they have become parents,—that is to say, upon their conduct in younger life.*

Do not think that I exaggerate, or speak of things that ought not to be mentioned in the pulpit. We priests have a sincere appreciation for the

temporal welfare, for the life and health of parents as well as of children, and the more so, since the temporal welfare, as a rule, goes hand in hand with the eternal. This we learn from Our Heavenly Father and the Divine Saviour, both of whom will and desire, that mankind upon earth should be as happy and blessed with life and health, as is compatible with the state of punishment in which we find ourselves. Who thwarts these designs of divine love? The mortal enemy of mankind, the devil, and mankind, alas, also Christians, Catholics, who permit themselves to be deceived by the arch-fiend. *Do you know the most effective rules of health which have ever been prescribed, and, to be sure, not by men, but by God Himself? They are the Ten Commandments, especially the fifth and sixth.* If these were observed conscientiously—to mention but the two most important points — if all mankind, children, youths, maidens, men and women lived *temperately* and *chastely*, then physicians and druggists would have a hundred, nay, a thousand times, less to do than they actually have.

But *intemperance*, especially in drinking, *impurity* in all its various species, which the unclean spirit suggests to corrupt the flesh—this is the poison with which, particularly our young people, gradually ruin the health of the body, and, indeed, even the freshness and vigor of the soul. If, instead of myself, an experienced, sincere physician should address you, he could, from his own observation, place before you facts, which would fill you with alarm. There are now-a-days numerous opium-eaters, opium-tipplers, opium-injectors. They are unhappy slaves.

Without strength and without a will, they collapse in a short time, like a tree whose innermost marrow has been worm eaten, like a blight-stricken flower in whose bud a poisonous insect has begun to nest. Worse and much more widespread, is the hellish poison of intemperance, and still more so, that of impurity, which the demons of darkness administer to miserable mortals, and which in full draughts is swallowed by young and old. Slowly, but surely, this poisonous cup destroys both body and soul. The boy radiant with health, the girl beaming with the fresh bloom of life in a short time is reduced to a woe-begone figure, weak with faintness, and consumption, and all manner of corporal infirmities. And, if such young men and women should crowd themselves into the state of matrimony, we must gratefully regard it as a mark of mercy, if such a marriage remain without issue. For, only sympathy and pity can be given to those poor children, who are doomed to derive their earthly life from such a pestilential source. Sickness and disease of all kinds germinate in their flesh and blood and will accompany them on their sad and short career through life. Indeed, because of the intimate union existing between body and soul, the most deplorable consequences will manifest themselves in regard to the understanding, heart and will of children, who are just awakening to rational life. In all the children of Adam, original sin has clouded the understanding, drawn the heart with its low passions earthward, and weakened the will. I am firmly convinced, that the personal sins of parents,

especially the sins of the flesh they committed before marriage, increase and aggravate these sad consequences as regards their children to such a degree, that they will shudder with terror, upon seeing them revealed one day by the hand of God.

Wherefore, I beseech, I conjure you, young men and women, recoil with horror from the sins of the flesh! No one will begrudge or forbid you, young men, a glass of beer or other beverage, when taken moderately in innocent recreation and for needed refreshment of your strength. But not too much, and not too often! And do not make a habit thereof. Apart from all other evil consequences, you take into your blood germs that are poisonous, and which later on will be developed in your poor children. And still more, *O young men and young women*, recoil with horror from the diabolical cup of secret impurity! Preserve your body and soul virginal, pure, chaste! If anyone should seek to seduce you, look upon him as your deadly enemy, and drive him away without delay. He does not love you. All his assurances of love are lies and snares and stupefying allurements of sinful passions. He is a veritable devil unto you; for, being an abettor of the devil, he endeavors to accomplish the devil's work in you, to kill your soul, to ruin your body and to poison its health.

Of you, dear parents, let me hope, that the stream of your life in youth was fresh, pure and clean. The priest very cordially participates in the joy of Christian parents, when they can tell him in all sincerity, for instance, at the occasion of a general confession, "No, of the muddy water of impurity I

did never drink." If, on the contrary, you, O parents, have had the great misfortune to enter into the state of matrimony and the dignity of parents by the road of unchastity, then, I trust, that you have repented of your sins, made amends for them, and prayed and yet continue to pray to God, that His omnipotence would govern and rule all, so as to make only you, and not your children, to suffer the evil consequences of your iniquities. It is evident, therefore, that parents, even before they enter upon matrimony, are bound to be solicitous for the life and health of their children.

2. Of this same solicitude *during the time after marriage*, I ought scarcely to speak. Also during this period, even for the preservation of *life* and *health*, the principle must obtain as supreme: *Keep aloof from sin.*

If the world now-a-days were not so unutterably wicked, and if there were not, even among Christians, married couples of whom at least one part, usually the husband, is totally devoid of religion, faith and conscience, I should not utter before a Catholic congregation the terrible word: Beware of *infanticide* in married life! Woe, woe unto the married, who dare to oppose God's creative power and to prevent His designs! They are by far worse than the basest murderers. All excuses of want of provision for so many children, of feebleness and infirmity, come from him who is a liar and a murderer from the beginning, who is never wanting for venal instruments to kill the voice of conscience and to provide for the murderous hand the means of crime. I cannot comprehend how such

wicked child-murderers can have even only one moment of rest!

Thanks be to God! You, O parents, are not to be counted among this terrible class of mankind. But, if you are desirous to preserve the full calmness of your conscience, the perfect peace of God, then you must anxiously care for the life and health of your children, and, in the consciousness that you are responsible for both blessings, especially guard against many other faults, which, secretly, can endanger both.

Here, especially before and after the birth of the child, are to be mentioned on the part of the mother—anger, hatred, envy, a quarrelsome temper, a rancorous mood, ill-timed amusements, sins against conjugal chastity, and all violent movements of the soul. Very often, and in a variety of modes, the faults and passions mentioned, affect, because of the intimate union between body and soul, directly and immediately the life and health of father and mother, indirectly and through them, the child. The so-called hereditary ailments are *not always* a proof of the sins and vices of parents; they are, however, more frequently than many people are inclined to believe. And the more so, if we reflect that parents have it in their power, either to insure to themselves the blessing of God in regard to the life and health of their children, or to provoke His punishment. Of Tobias the Holy Ghost says explicitly, that, as a reward of his virtue, he saw about himself his children and children's children unto the fifth generation. To David, after he had been reconciled with God through contri-

tion, the prophet announced, that, as a temporal punishment for his crime, Jehovah had decreed the death of his son. And in a number of passages in the books of Moses, who again reminds the chosen people and points out to them the fact, that the observance of God's commandments insures temporal happiness, while sins and crimes, also in a temporal respect, draw down from heaven the curse of God, we read: "God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon their children unto the third and fourth generations" (5. Moses, 5, 9).

This is no injustice on the part of God, but He wisely and justly permits it. The children cannot complain. But the parents are accountable. In life, parents may not think of it; but in death, when they are judged, many, many things shall be disclosed before the eyes of a father or a mother, which, during life, because of their levity and want of living faith, they never thought of.

With the avoidance of the faults and passions mentioned, you must combine *all those little and multifarious cares*, which the nursing and preserving of *life* and *health* impose upon you. In this respect, indeed, the child is much more and by far longer dependent upon the care and watchfulness of parents than any other living being upon the author of its existence. Moreover, a new-born babe is itself so helpless, that, at first, during many months, it can do absolutely nothing for itself, and, later on, little more than nothing. Why, little infants are not even able to say what ails them, so that the physician, or nurse, must guess and conjecture, and act accordingly. In the face of such

helplessness on the part of children, and in view of the numerous dangers to which they are exposed in consequence, we rightly say: Adult people need but *one*, while small children stand in need of at least *two* Guardian Angels. Good parents will consider it a sacred duty to recommend again and again each day the life and health of their children to their Guardian Angel, and to repeat to them, from the time that they begin to lisp, some short ejaculatory prayer to their Guardian Angel, so often, until they shall be able to say it themselves. It matters not for the time being, if they do not understand the meaning of the words. The Angel Guardian, certainly, will understand them. — The Guardian Angel must accomplish much, even the most; but not all. The visible angels guardian are the parents, especially the mothers. Wherefore, beware of imprudence and carelessness! — There is a mother who has taken her infant with her into bed. After a couple of hours she awakes, and finds, that her child, alas! is dead. She smothered it herself! — There another mother hurries out of the house to exchange a few words with a neighboring woman. Just how many these few words prove to be, I am at a loss to say. Suddenly, she hears her baby scream and runs back to find, that it upset its chair, fell against the hot stove, and very likely will be a cripple for all its lifetime. Another mother is out visiting one afternoon. This is no sin. But the visit lasts quite long. Whilst sipping coffee and munching cake, how the time flew by! But at home, of course, everything is all right; the little one was fast asleep when the

mother left the house, and the five year old brother and the seven year old sister have strict orders to take good care of the baby. But when the mother returns home, she finds things quite different. The little one broke its arm and leg, or is hurt otherwise interiorly, so that it will have to suffer, in consequence, during the whole of its life-time.

Is this mere imagination, or is it real life? O parents, fathers and mothers! understand and ponder well your duties and fulfil them. Otherwise you would have done better, had you never become parents! From a conscientious fulfilment of your obligations, also in regard to the life and health of your children, depend for you tranquillity and peace, blessing and salvation, in time and eternity. Amen.

## 3. Care for the Health and Temporal Welfare of Children.

### Industry and Economy to be cultivated even in Youth.

Nemo unquam carnem suam odio habuit, sed nutrit et fovet eam. Eph. 5, 29.

"No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it.

In the natural order of earthly existence, life and health are the highest goods. They are given to children by Almighty God and preserved by the parents, who, as representatives and instruments of God, must be solicitous for both of these benefits. The supreme principle which is to guide us in this care, is: *Keep yourselves far from sin*, and especially from the sins of the flesh, viz., intemperance and impurity. Though the unclean spirit may sweeten these sins with a few drops of sensual pleasure, yet they are deadly poison, not alone for the soul, but also for life and health. If parents, if fathers and mothers, owing to sins committed before matrimony, corrupt and poison their own marrow and blood, and through incessant sins during married life, continue this process of self-poisoning, then it is not to be wondered at, if children and children's children ever grow weaker and more miserable. Even in this sense it is true: "*He that*

*soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption*" (Gal. 6, 8). This corruption comes upon parents and, through them, upon their children, in part directly, as a natural consequence, and in part indirectly, as a temporal punishment imposed by Almighty God. Had we, on an average, no pleasure-hunting and impure, but temperate and chaste young men and young women, and, consequently, sober and chaste parents, then the life and health of future generations would improve vastly. Do not think I exaggerate; the particular and the last judgment shall disclose to you facts at which you will be astounded. Wherefore, youths and maidens, fathers and mothers, hold fast, at least from now on, to the principle according to which you say: Away from us with the sin of the flesh, intemperance and impurity!

Connected with this supreme principle there are, moreover, many *positive* duties. The necessary vigilance to be exercised, especially by mothers, I have already intimated.

Let us consider to-day,

1. a few other moments which may seem small, yet are important both for life and health;

2. the chief obligation of parents to provide for the temporal well-being of their children, namely the duty of industry and economy.

1. In the first place, it is important, that parents train their children to observe from early youth, a regular order in sleeping, eating and drinking. This is of great, yea, in most cases of overwhelming influence on the spiritual and the moral life of the child. For, if little children at the hand

of father and mother have not learnt order in this regard, the low passions and the appetites of the flesh will increase excessively. They will overrun the will, captivate and enslave it. The little boys and girls will grow to be young men and women, who have not the courage to overcome themselves even in the least; who, like enervated cowards, cast themselves into the arms of sloth and sensual gratification. Then, of course, love for Christianity, which is a religion of the Cross and mortification and self-denial, must come to naught.

Of this, however, I will not speak to-day. Order in sleeping, eating and drinking, also exerts a great influence on the preservation and vigor of life and health. If children from their third to their fourth year sleep too long and entirely according to caprice, they usually develop into lazy, bloated lumps of flesh without energy. But, if with a determined hand, and, if necessary by means of a rod, they are trained to retire to rest and rise at a fixed hour, for the purpose that they may not indulge in more than from eight to nine hours sleep, their body will develop fresh and healthy.

Still more does this hold good of a fixed routine in eating and drinking. The regular meals in the morning, at noon and in the evening, between these at 10 in the forenoon, and at 4 in the afternoon a slight lunch—such, and not more, should parents give and allow their children. Whatever is over and above this, especially the abominable habit of nibbling all kinds of sweetmeats, which, besides, in most cases, contain more or less poisonous ingredients, must be condemned as injurious. Children,

who, so to speak, are busy munching all day, have an unhealthy appetite. What they eat does not serve to strengthen the marrow and bone of their little bodies and to promote healthy growth, but only makes them a receptacle of germs of many a disease. An experienced physician told me not so very long ago: "If there were not so much excessive eating, especially among children, we physicians should not have half as much to do; and if one observes, as he cannot but observe, how children born in this country of parents who immigrated from foreign nations, become more and more enfeebled and at the age of sixteen, eighteen or twenty years possess not half the strength and hardiness of their old father or aged mother: it is certain the fault lies not wholly and alone with the climate. The principal cause is the disorder in eating and drinking continued from day to day ever since earliest childhood."

Another cause must be sought in the fact, that the simple, wholesome, strengthening fare, which a loving mother, who is an experienced, economical cook, prepares on the domestic hearth, is displaced by good-for-nothing, nay, mostly dangerous sweets and goodies; these so many mothers, of course with little trouble to themselves, but also at no small expense, get at the store all ready made, or simply have them brought to the house.

Concerning another point, I hardly venture to say a word. Priests from the pulpit and in books admonish parents by saying: "Do clothe your children in a becoming manner, lest they, especially girls, loose holy modesty already in tender childhood."

Well-meaning physicians say it over and over: "The bad habit of wearing injurious, fashionable clothes, ruins the health of our girls." Both, however, preach to deaf ears. It's the fashion, you know, and fashion is a tyrant, and to the idol of fashion some parents are ready to sacrifice soul and conscience, life and health of their children. Here one must simply say: He that will not listen to counsel, cannot be helped—cannot be helped until the time of visitation in later life and the time of judgment, when the deserved punishment shall be inflicted.

Great and numerous are the obligations which the *care for life and health of their children* imposes upon parents.

2. Life and health, however, are but the basis and prerequisites of *temporal happiness*. Parents, as we have seen, shall introduce the child into human society, and make it as happy a member of the vast human family as possible. They shall, in a word, care *for the temporal advancement of their children*. As to irrational creatures an all-wise Creator has provided a most efficacious means for the preservation of their brood by an implanted instinct. The hen in the yard, and the sparrow in the street protect and feed their young at least so long, until these are able to gather food and care for themselves. This, however, lasts with animals at most only a few weeks;—with parents almost throughout a whole life-time. For, until the twelfth, fourteenth, sixteenth year, children live and grow, almost exclusively, owing to the solicitude and pains spent upon them by their

parents; then begin for parents the additional cares of enabling their children to help themselves further on without direct or indirect parental assistance. Hence, there are cares without number or stint; cares from the day of marriage until the priest stands above the corpse of the father, broken down from labor, or the mother, consumed with anxiety, and pronounces the last words of benediction over them: May they now rest in peace!

If we wish to comprehend right away under one general head the manifest obligations which these cares entail upon parents, we may briefly say, *they are industry and frugality.* And here let me say immediately:

These two *Christian* duties and virtues must be exercised and acquired already *before marriage*, by those who believe and hope, that the Heavenly Father will call them to the dignity of the parental state. The necessity thereof is evident.

A proverb says, 'What you accustom yourself to in youth, you will do in old age' — and 'What Johnny has not learnt when he was a sprig, John will not learn after he is grown big.'

If youths and girls do not habituate themselves to regular, enduring industry; if they have not learned to save the pennies they acquired, or to deny themselves useless, dangerous amusements which cost time and money, then they will never learn it later on. Maybe, that in later life necessity will compel them to work; that want, extreme need will make it impossible for them to take in all the amusements as extravagantly as they did in youth. In this case, it will mostly be only what I might

call a spasmodical industry, a temporary, brief economy, but no habit, no virtue. This produces that sort of parents, who on pa's pay-day are jolly and live riotously, but only to hunger and suffer want the day after.

An early habituation to industry and economy is required also for this reason, that it is good and desirable, nay, necessary, to have in hand, when one enters upon the parental state, at least some temporal means for the future. It does seem really sad, and is a wide, yawning gate for poverty and wretchedness, when the young man and woman, let us call them the bridal party, during all the years of their youth, enjoying bodily health and with abundant opportunity for work, have scarcely saved and laid by enough to defray with difficulty the expense of their wedding day,—still owing the photographer for the beautiful bridal picture, and, perhaps, also the bill for the wedding clothes somewhere else! This is, of a truth, a sad beginning, and the continuation will grow still sadder, especially for the poor children. For woe to parents, if, through lack of industry, and, perhaps still more, by unreasonable indulgence in pleasure during the time of youth, they have laid the foundation for poverty and indigence! If *they* alone would reap what they have sowed in their youth, I should not pity them very much. Penury, hunger, destitution and wretchedness can become for them a school of penance for the unchecked, riotous sensuality of their youth. The poor children, whom the levity of parents has cast into such misery from their very cradle, are, indeed, very much to be pitied.

These are serious and practical thoughts that concern all young persons, but especially the *young men*. They shall and wish to stand one day as men and fathers at the head of the family. Upon their shoulders chiefly does the Heavenly Father wish to lay all the temporal cares for food and support of the family. Wherefore, every Christian young man ought to consider it a sacred duty before God and men, and a real point of honor, that, through industry and frugality, he should not only lay by something, but also work ahead to such a degree, that, relying on what he was able to do in early manhood, and trusting in God, of course, he may say to himself quietly and confidently: I hope, I shall advance and be able to support a family. If he is not willing and cannot do this; if he has frittered away the precious time of youth in idleness and sloth, or even poisoned and squandered it in sinful sensuality, and fettered himself with the enslaving shackles of drink and gambling and, alas, impurity, often so expensive, and of which, perhaps, he will nevermore rid himself: then it would be a hundred times better for himself, to drag along his wretched existence until his premature death singly, than to draw wife and children down into lifelong misery.

Wherefore, the *necessity* of industry and thrift in reference to the duty of parents to provide for the temporal welfare of their children, exists already before parents have become parents. In view of this necessity, what is the condition of affairs when we cast a glance into the daily life of our youth? Thanks be to God, in general a good report can be given as to industriousness. People in this country

are spurred on to activity, partly by *indigence*, partly by the hot, feverish excitement evinced on all sides in the *bustle and hurry after the almighty dollar*. This, of course, also produces various evil results, even as to future temporal happiness. Thus, for instance, boys and girls, during the days immediately following their first Communion, chase after a paltry few cents of wages, instead of preparing themselves first by additional education for a position, in which they might make a living much better and by far easier. Many a young man or woman drudge in some menial occupation, with hard work and poor pay, all their youth, nay, all their lifetime. Had they, for a few short years, foregone the pleasure of earning one or two dollars wages per week, and, instead, attended to a further education of themselves, they would be enabled to occupy a much easier, more respectable and more profitable position.

But of this I do not propose to speak to-day. I will gladly acknowledge the consoling fact, that, as a general rule, our youth is industrious and thrifty. Of course, there are also exceptions. Lazy boys, who find no work simply because they do not want to find any, and get no work, because employers do not propose to pay laziness, but labor; slothful and comfort-seeking girls, who would much rather kill time by sitting in the rocking chair and reading all kinds of bad stuff, than to relieve their poor old mother in doing the house-work, — such, indeed, are also to be found among us. However, they form the exception. Anyone may easily pick them out. They dishonor themselves.

But, let me ask, is the second virtue, I mean Christian frugality, equally beautiful and resplendent among our young people? I fear, it is not. The mortal foe of this frugality is the chase after amusements, and thus sensuality is more and more becoming the gangrene which eats away the marrow and bone and also the cents, shillings and dollars of our young men, and, also, of our young women. A certain young man for years earned a hundred dollars per month. As his parents were wealthy, he was not asked to pay them anything at home. After he had earned such wages for several years, I asked him: "How much have you in the savings bank?" Answer: "Nothing."—"But how is this possible?"—"Oh, father,—theatre, dancing school, balls, concerts, parties, excursions, occasional feasts, saloons, billiards—all this, not now and then, but in varied alternation, week after week, and even more frequently, costs a savage lot of money. It was often difficult for me to pull through with a hundred dollars!" — Well, not all carry on that badly, for the simple reason that they cannot, and do not earn a hundred dollars per month. But this I do know, and for more than one young man did I perform the calculation: Many Catholic young men spend and squander without the least benefit to body and soul, much more than is just. And many young women (to mention but this one instance concerning them) carry on their head and back the greatest part of the wages they earn, in vain, useless, not adorning but often disfiguring trappings.

This sensuality commences already with the

little boys and girls. Every cent, every nickel they receive from parents, uncles and aunts, boys must invest in cigarettes to smoke, while boys and girls often waste their pennies for poisonous candy. With youths and maidens, this sensuality, which was never overcome, but constantly increased, assumes but another form, and costs no longer cents and nickels, but shillings and dollars.

It is with difficulty that the poor old parents—according to the evil custom here in vogue, which makes the children of the house to be considered as boarders — receive, or, I might more truly say, beg a few paltry dollars for board and lodging of their adult sons and daughters. All, all is sacrificed to gratify sensuality and pride.

And these are our marriageable young men and women, so eager to enter wedlock!—Just wait; the days shall come when in the midst of your children, clamoring for bread, you will exclaim: Oh, that I now had the money I so uselessly squandered in my youth! — Take, then, the matter seriously. Do not allow yourselves to be carried away by sensual gratification. Accustom yourselves to a habit of industry and economy. Nay more — acquire in youth *the art to deny yourselves in one or the other point;* for this is, so to speak, a very precious, nay exceedingly essential dowry for the conjugal and parental state of life. It is a necessary prerequisite or foundation for the temporal, earthly welfare of children, and for the happiness and peace of the entire family. To acquire and practice it will not be easy. However, it is an essential part of your future prosperity in this life. You know the pro-

verb which says, that "*each is the builder of his own fortune.*" If in youth you are lazy; if you shirk work; if you are wasteful; if you imagine that while you are young, you ought to take in every pleasure and amusement; if in youth you seek to exceed the somewhat narrow bounds in which the plain habits and the simple wants of your good old parents would keep you: then you shape for yourselves and, unfortunately, also for your children a lot in life, which will prove anything but a happy one. But if, on the contrary, you have habituated yourselves in youth to work diligently, to save reasonably, to hold aloof from useless, nay perilous enjoyments and pleasures, then you may hope with confidence, that the Heavenly Father will build up for yourselves and your children, a life of solid happiness on the foundation of these truly Christian virtues. And this happiness on earth will be to you the fore-runner, the harbinger of eternal bliss in heaven. Amen.

## 4. Industry and Economy of Parents.

Si quis suorum, et maxime domesticorum, curam non habet, fidem negavit, et est infideli deterior. 1. Tim. 5, 8.

"If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel."

Labor is a duty of all the children of Adam without exception. This duty is as old as mankind. Even anterior to sin, man was not to be absolutely idle, but was placed in Paradise "to dress it and to keep it" (1. Moses, 2, 15). This was labor without burden or pain, — an agreeable occupation of the dormant powers in man. Afterwards the situation became quite different. Until then man had been the king of the visible creation; this was subject to him and readily, cheerfully and abundantly furnished him with all he needed for his bodily sustenance. But now man, this king, becomes a rebel against God, his supreme King. To punish the rebel, all creation shall from now on rebel against him and no longer yield the necessaries of life willingly, but only when conquered by hard labor. "*Cursed is the earth because of thy deed; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*" (1. Mos., 3, 17).

This is the law of labor for all mankind without exception. No one can or dare withdraw himself therefrom without coming into conflict with avenging Justice. Driven from the earthly Paradise, all Adam's descendants become laborers. Conscientious, industrious work combined with economy, as her indispensable companion, shall lead them back to the rest eternal of the heavenly Paradise.

A double and manifold duty do industry and economy become for those, whom God calls to such a state of life in which they are obliged to care, not only for themselves, but also for others. By this, principally, parents are meant in relation to their children with whom God has blessed them. We have seen recently, how those two duties must be learnt, exercised and acquired even before parents become parents. Our youth, our young men and young women must be industrious and saving, whereby the time of youth becomes by no means gloomy and melancholy, but only thoughtful and resolute. Innocent recreation, moderate and well-regulated enjoyments are not excluded; only against reckless frivolity and, above all, sensual gratification, which is so dangerous for body and soul, time and eternity, safe barriers are drawn. Woe to young men and girls who, dissipate in idleness and unbridled lust the beautiful time of youth! They bed themselves and their children very badly, and, indeed, as a rule not only for time, but also for eternity. In this connection also the admonition of the Holy Ghost holds good: Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of

which thou shalt say, They please me not (Eccles. 21, 1). A blessing upon the youth, who, through work and frugality, curb and regulate the levity of youth! Should God call them to the dignity of parents, the training in youth will make it sweet and easy for them to fulfil the most necessary parental obligations. Let us, then, see:

1. the strict obligation parents have of exercising these duties;
2. the punishment for neglecting them;
3. the reward for fulfilling them.

1. As to the obligation itself, I hardly need to say another word. All living beings, whom the Creator of all things calls into existence by generation according to the laws implanted by Him into their nature, He refers for support of life to the immediate authors of their existence, at least so long, until they can help themselves. This law is universal, evident and obvious to our eyes. Following the instinct of nature, all animals, often with admirable zeal and indefatigable endurance, take care of their young, until they are able to care for themselves. To the nature of parents God has imparted more than blind instinct. He, from whom comes all paternity, implants into their hearts a tender, powerful, persevering love. No other natural love will stand a comparison with the affection of parents towards their children. There are, of course, some parents in whose heart the affection for their children has been stifled; but, thanks be to God, they form rare exceptions and only attest the fact, that such hearts have

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become totally ruined and hardened through other vices, and by them grown unnatural and monstrous. To this love in the hearts of parents, sanctified, strengthened, deified by the grace of the sacrament of matrimony and the marriage blessing, which is bestowed upon both parents, but especially upon the mother, the Heavenly Father addresses Himself: to this love He intrusts the dear little ones with the admonition: "Foster, clothe, prepare them for their future struggle. Parents, you are my representatives; your children belong more to me than to you. Not immediately, as by a miracle, do I wish to nourish, clothe, bring up and qualify them for life. I desire to do all this *through you.* You shall be my representatives, the bearers and mediators of my solicitude. At the same time remember this: whatsoever you do or neglect with regard to your children, I shall consider, reward or punish, just as if you had done, or neglected to do so to me. I command your children to honor, love and obey you as my representatives, and upon the observance or non-observance of these filial duties, I place my paternal blessing or malediction. And you, parents, I command to conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the honor I have conferred on you, by blessing you with children."—Oh, indeed, what a sublime position parents do occupy considering it even from a merely natural point of view! But how serious and sacred, also, are the duties connected with it!

We have—and I think with full justice—united these duties under the two heads of *industry* and *economy.* Only a constant, lifelong practice of these

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virtues renders the fulfilment of those duties possible, and, indeed, makes them a blissful reality. These duties, which are to be practiced both by father and mother, constitute, as it were, a treasure-house, and an inexhaustible exchequer of the family, if, through prayer and a genuine christian life, the blessing of the Heavenly Father be added thereto. They are the two protecting genii of the family. Wheresoever they move the hand and foot, the head and heart of father and mother, and preserve them in activity, parents are happy, children are happy. Wheresoever they are missing, wheresoever they are put to flight by criminal sloth and frivolous indulgence in pleasure, there every door and window are thrown wide open to invite want and misery on parents and children, and, indeed, not alone for time, but most generally also for eternity. I say, wheresoever they are missing. But,

2. is it really possible that parents, who wish to pass as christian parents, are not industrious and saving in the interests of their own flesh and blood, *i. e.* for their own dear children? Thank God, we can truthfully state from the experience of every day life, that this great offense against one of the first requirements of the law of nature, is not found *too often* among *Catholic* families. On the contrary, one may observe, how not unfrequently, also Catholic parents, not so much from a bad will, as more in consequence of a lack of better understanding, and led astray by the spirit of the age, go too far and entertain excessive cares for the prosperity of their children, both as to the

present and the future. Why do such and such parents torment themselves with work day and night, without rest and intermission, without bestowing even on their own health the necessary care, without allowing themselves a little recreation of any kind, be it ever so innocent? Why do they not find any time for prayer, for taking part in the beautiful devotions of the church, for a frequent reception of the sacraments? And when an appeal is made to their Christian charity for the support of the church and school, in behalf of the poor and orphans, for the Holy Father, or for such poor in the neighborhood as are ashamed to beg, — why have they, at most, only a few cents or nickels to give? Are they so indigent?

No, they are actually in good circumstances, have already saved and laid by a considerable amount, could do ten and twenty times better than what they do. Why do they not do so? "Oh our children" — thus I often hear them lament and excuse themselves. "They shall not have it as wretched and hard as we have had it. We commenced with nothing, and have worked ourselves up amid severe labor, hunger and thirst. Our children shall have it better; for we are anxious to leave them a goodly inheritance, or, at least, give them before our death a good start to help them to be independent." How nice, — is it not!

And I say: What blindness, what a lack of Christianity can this occasion, and actually does only too often! O parents, if there be any such here present, reflect on the word of Jesus, "Lay up treasures for heaven, treasures which are not

consumed either by rust or moths, and are not dug out and stolen by thieves." Whatever you do for your children from a merely natural love of them, shall bring you no reward, or but very little reward in heaven. Only what you do with your earthly goods from a higher motive and for a higher purpose, will merit reward unto heaven, and here your soul and your salvation are of higher importance than all the temporal prosperity of your children. Wherefore, excercise supernatural, Christian love of your neighbor by distributing of your earthly goods in charity, and thus gather unto yourselves heavenly treasures, ere the night of death come, wherein you no longer can perform any good works. Otherwise, peradventure, you may yet have to turn around in your grave, as the saying goes, when you see how your children squander your savings, and how these have profited you nothing unto heaven, and have been a source of harm to your children. Who knows how many parents must suffer in purgatory intensely long, simply because they have saved exceedingly in behalf of their children, but at the expense of Christian piety!

Aside of this class of parents, there are, alas! also such, who, through *lack of industriousness and frugality*, yea, by the very opposite crimes, through laziness and, yet more, through sensuality, through drink, gambling and gadding about, sin grievously against the temporal well-being of their children. And here first in order are the habitual drunkards. On pay-day, perhaps on the first or second day thereafter, one third or two thirds of the wages

are spent in drinks, gambling and amusements. And at home there sorrows the poor mother with a crowd of children. No shoes, no clothes, no bread, no salt, nothing to eat, nothing to drink; no credit in the store, neither with the baker nor the butcher; the bills which are not yet paid, have already been run up too high. Late in the night, early in the morning the dissolute father staggers home; his greeting is swearing, cursing, blaspheming. He throws a few paltry cents on the table for his wife; then he drops down to sleep off his drink, only to begin anew afterwards. Oh, thou cruel raven of a father! Thou thief and robber, yea, worse than thief and robber! These take away from strangers, thou dost rob and steal the bread from the mouth, and the clothes from the back of thy own children. "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." The hen on the barnfloor scrapes until fatigued, to find a grain. Having found one, she does not satisfy her own hunger, but calls her brood and is delighted when they pick the grain. A father who, being an habitual drunkard, lets his children suffer want and wretchedness, is he not worse than the irrational animal? And what punishment awaits him when he dies? "Thou hast not clothed me, thou hast not given me food nor drink. Away thou accursed, into everlasting fire!"

And if to these serious reflections on such unnatural fathers I shall add an earnest word to the young ladies, there let me say: "For God's sake,

young ladies, do not marry a young man, who, during the years of his youth, has contracted the habit of intemperance. He may have pledged his word and promised you ever so solemnly: "I'll give it up" — alas! ninety nine times out of a hundred cases, he will very soon forget his most sacred promises. His former habits again break out, enslave and tear him along and, at the same time, cast yourselves and children into misery and wretchedness. Former friends, I mean those who used to be his boon companions when drinking and gambling, keep dogging his heels and allow themselves neither peace nor respite until by ceaseless ridicule and nagging they fill him with a disgust for the quiet, humdrum, economical life spent in the family; and thus he is drawn back again into their jolly company. Such companionship, however, consumes the greatest part of his wages. The consequence is, in a short while, his wife and children will be on the hands of some charitable society founded for the support of helpless poor.

And are examples so very rare which go to demonstrate, that young women, who are blinded by passion which they unjustly style "love," often get into such misery? On the occasion of a certain mission, the worthy pastor introduced to me the woe-begone figure of a young woman, and asked me to speak to her and to save her from despair. One of her eyes was knocked out entirely, and the other was green and blue from suffusion. The meanest clothing covered and protected but scantily her gaunt figure and the crying babe in her arms. "This woman," the pastor then explained to me,

"ten years ago was one of the most promising young ladies of my congregation. A young man who already for years had been addicted to drinking and gambling, sued for her hand. Parents, friends, I myself did everything to dissuade her from marrying him. Blinded by passion, she always had but this one answer, 'He is such a nice young man and promised me to give up drinking and gambling, if I would marry him.' Here you behold the consequences of her blindness."

And this is but a little example from amongst many others. Countless mothers, all the days of their life, deplore, that as girls they have been too credulous in this regard.

Aside of this grossest and most atrocious violation of the care for children, many parents become guilty of sin in a manner less noticeable, which, however, is still punishable before God. The father, for instance, in such a case, is not exactly an habitual drunkard or gambler, but as a young man he, nevertheless, used to join in lustily, lived friskily from day to day, and thus squandered many a dollar; now, having become the father of a family, he forgets but too often, that his wages do not belong to him alone, but also to his wife and children. Thus he is even now yet bent on taking in all the pleasures and enjoyments, which he was wont to love in his youth. There is no lack of occasions, of invitations on the part of friends and acquaintances; therefore, he goes along and joins in, either alone, or, sometimes accompanied by his wife. How many a dollar, which might be used to good advantage in behalf of the children,

and which they often need very badly, is spent in this way! Is it possible that father and mother ever have money for balls, concerts, theaters, excursions, but nothing for the most necessary support of church and school, yes, nothing, to pay household bills which demand payment most urgently and have run up very high!

And as for *mothers*, yes, their head and heart are often filled yet for a long time with the vanity and pride of the girl. In dress and housekeeping, in decorating the rooms, everything must be according to the *latest style*, and, by no manner of means, cheaper or less grand than the neighbors have it. The poor husband does not know where the money goes which he earned with the sour sweat of his brow. The mother wasted it for useless knicknacks. — And what did the mother learn when she was a girl? To keep house? To knit and darn stockings? To make and mend clothes? To be saving? To keep the pennies together? To observe order and cleanliness in all things even though in poor circumstances? — That is old-fashioned and does not suit the dames of our times. Nowadays one goes to the stores, buys everything wonderfully fine and wonderfully cheap; in twice seven days it is torn to pieces. Then one goes again and buys new things, casts the old ones away and sells them to the ragpicker. Such mothers throw out through the window what the father brings in at the door. Soon want and poverty stare out from every nook and corner. Alas for the poor, poor children of such mothers! Oh, the thoughtlessness with which youth flings itself into

matrimony, to become father and mother without vocation and without qualification! Oh, the punishment that awaits such parents!

3. Now I ought to speak of the reward, good parents have to expect for a well-regulated industry and economy, with which they provide throughout an entire lifetime for the well-being of their children. But the reward is too great, and cannot be measured by the feeble words I utter. Or, is it not truly a reward, fraught with happiness, to have led others and above all one's own children on the way of genuine prosperity? Just ask the aged father, the decrepit mother, who in the evening of their life on one or other occasion, for instance on a name's day, have a crowd of grown-up children assembled around them; ask them if they regret the labor and pains, the saving and caring, by which they made their children happy? With tears of joy in their eyes, they will tell you: Not for all the gold and silver of the world would we exchange the bliss which we experience in our hearts.

And what is the best and safest way to grow rich in merits for eternity, and therefore, also to insure the exceeding great reward in heaven? — The *industry* and *frugality* of parents. They perform no great deeds in the eyes of the world, but their angels guardian, and the guardian angels of the children write down from day to day, from hour to hour, with golden pencil into the book of life, what parents have done, suffered, endured and saved for their children. Filled with wonderment they shall behold after death the treas-

ures, which they gathered, and ask in humility: O Lord, how is it possible, that I became so rich? And the Lord, the friend of children, shall answer them: You have labored both for your and my children. Now take your rest. I am paying you the exceeding great reward of everlasting bliss, Amen.

## 5. On the Care of giving Children a thorough Education at School.

Docete filios vestros. Deut. 11, 19.
"Teach your children."

Industry and economy are two duties which all mankind without exception must fulfil throughout life. For, all shall one day hear the solemn word, "*Give an account of thy stewardship!*" And this stewardship, for the greater part, is concentrated in the two duties I mentioned. However, these duties weigh by far more heavily on the shoulders of parents, even if we take into consideration only the first and smallest part of their charge — to care for life and health and for the temporal prosperity of their children. It is necessary that they should have learned and practiced these two duties from early youth, in order to continue to practice them amid incessant solicitude and pains, until their strength is broken in death and the Heavenly Father calls to them: "Now rest with me in the blissful repose of heaven." For, by industry and economy, parents must acquire and keep together the necessary means, not alone for the daily support of the children, as long as these are yet small and live under the surveillance of their parents,

but by far more yet, that they may become qualified to provide for themselves, to establish their own life's fortune, after they have grown independent and closed the eyes of a dying father or a dying mother with true, filial affection. And what must be the proposed aim of parental industry and frugality? Perchance, after death to leave to the children the largest possible inheritance? The answer may be "yes," and "no." No — if by this inheritance you understand nothing but chinking money, house and land, or business. For though such an inheritance is not to be despised, this much, however, is certain — not a few children with such an inheritance grow to be the poorest beggars, while other children without any portion whatever, achieve for themselves a solid fortune. Yes — if the labor and saving and solicitude of parents, tend to leave as inheritance for their children, a genuine Christian education, a *thorough schooling* and, in conjunction therewith, *the acquisition of a useful employment. Of christian education* we shall speak, when we treat of the second obligation of parents, viz., to lead back their children into the heavenly home. In order to fulfil the first duty, which consists in training children to become, as far as possible, happy pilgrims here on earth, the most important thing to do, is to give them a *good thorough school education*. Let us, then, see:

1. Its necessity, and
2. the obligation of parents to provide for the same.

1. In order to obtain heaven, a school education, *i. e.*, as we understand it here, the mental

possession of the ordinary, natural knowledge, is not absolutely necessary. In judgment no one will be asked, 'Are you a scholar, can you write, read and reckon well?' — but, 'Have you shaped your life according to the word and example of the Redeemer, Who is your divine model?' Still less is it necessary in order to obtain heaven, or to secure a successful life in the world, that all belong to the class of the learned, properly so called. For, in regard to heaven, the saying not unfrequently proves true: The greater the smattering, the deeper the folly. The so-called learned are by far not always the best Christians, but, on the contrary, quite often very conceited, proud, unapproachable, and Catholic *only in name*, if not something much worse.

Even for earthly happiness, learning, properly so called, is not a necessary prerequisite. Else, to be sure, the Heavenly Father would have made it impossible for very many of his children to attain this earthly happiness, by denying them the necessary talents and many other auxiliary means. But the fact is certain — a good school education, if not indispensably necessary for the attainment of earthly prosperity, is nevertheless, very useful, and, indeed, to such a degree, that in most cases a young person that is growing up, will never advance as far in the world without an education, as when aided by it. Many of you are living witnesses of this fact, it matters not whether you were born in the old country or here. The circumstances of the family and of the surroundings were such to many of you in the time of childhood

and youth that you could not as much as think of any school education. Your parents and you from childhood up, had to struggle amid hard and heavy labor for your daily bread, and work yourselves out of great and, indeed, often extreme indigence with very poor wages. The lack of school facilities in the new world formed another drawback. Thus it came to pass that you learned to read, write and cipher, either not at all, or, only deficiently. This you often felt keenly and deplored bitterly. How often already did I hear parents remark — It shall not fare with my children as it did with me. Even though I cannot leave them an inheritance otherwise, they shall have a good schooling! — And you are right who speak thus. The entire social and commercial life has shaped itself in a manner, so that the lack of such an education is considered a *disgrace*, while a thorough school training is accounted an *honor* for its possessor, and aids him to secure a better and more influential position, in which he can advance more readily and which also enables him to do much more good for his fellowmen. Still greater than the disgrace, is the real disadvantage in business life. This nowadays is so much interwoven with lying, cheating and defrauding, that every one who is not able to read, write or cipher well, must expect without fail, that he will be gulled more than once, and, although he has no plethoric constitution, will have to submit to be bled by a process, which requires neither cupping glasses nor actual shedding of blood. Apart of the lowest and most common manual labor, a fair schooling

in knowledge is necessary for all conditions of life, but especially for boys. If you, parents, inquire of a boss, or employer, after a well-paying occupation for a son, let us say, after he has received his Communion, the first question almost always is — Can he read and write and cipher well?

This school education, then, is necessary as a means for earthly prosperity and advancement. You parents must provide for the latter; therefore, also for the former. Thanks be to God that precisely Catholic parents are uppermost in the fulfilment of this duty. On an average, they seek their joy and honor in the possession of well instructed children. Quite many save and even suffer want in their own person, so that they may gain the material means for a better education of their children.

2. Now if we ask, what obligations does the care for a good school-training impose upon parents, I might answer immediately: *Support, also materially, as Catholic parents your Catholic, denominational school; therefore, your parochial school, and send your children into this your own school.* But, as conditions vary in accordance with different countries and places, and, therefore, also entail different obligations, I shall content myself with the general admonition which may be applied to all places: As good Catholic parents, do in this twofold respect whatever is *useful*, or whatever even may be quite *necessary*, if the local conditions in which you live, are considered. In how far this may be required, you can learn in the safest manner from the priest, who has charge of your soul, and, at the same

time, passes the clearest judgment as to the circumstances of the case, — who knows best the wish and desire of the Church, your Mother, and who takes as deep an interest in the thorough education of your children, as you yourselves.

As faithful and loyal Catholics hold firmly once for all to the conviction, that your children are still more the children of the Heavenly Father, than your own. This Father, who is in Heaven, and His Only-begotten Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, have provided in the Church which He established, a true Mother for your little ones. Through the sacrament of regeneration, they, like yourselves, have become children of this Mother. With that love which she ever draws from the Divine Heart of her Founder, this Mother cares for the spiritual and eternal, as well as for the earthly and temporal welfare of your children.

As parents it is assuredly in the first place your duty to pave the way and lay the foundation for this twofold welfare in time and eternity. But because the Divine Saviour, the best friend of the little ones, is aware that your talents and strength and time, as a rule, are inadequate to discharge successfully all the duties which that twofold care entails, for this very reason He calls to you: "*Suffer the little children to come unto me*" (Mark. 10, 14), to Me, that is to say, to my Church in which I continue to live and operate. Having erected parochial schools, for the most part by her own individual effort and united them with the Tabernacle of the Altar, this Church through her priests and such teachers as she commissions

with the directions of her schools, instructs your children, in the first place and above all, in those truths of the Christian religion, which are absolutely necessary for their salvation. But then, also, in this connection the words hold good, "*Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matth. 6, 33); that is to say, like a truly loving mother, the Church in her parochial schools instructs your children also in those branches of knowledge, which are useful and necessary for their temporal welfare on this earth. An ungrateful world, blinded by hatred, may not only not acknowledge, but even call in question and deny the extent, the perseverance, and the splendid results with which the Church, and that, too, mostly amid the greatest difficulties, fulfilled and ever continues to fulfil this her secondary mission on earth. But, facts are stubborn things and cannot be erased so easily from the pages of history. And such is the fact, that the Catholic Church, by means of her schools, has civilized the world long before anyone knew, or even dreamt of other schools for the public.

These few words on the importance of parochial schools may suffice. Avoiding every and even the least controversy, our purpose is, to follow in these sermons only general principles, which are to be observed everywhere and by all parents. And thus, from amongst various points according to which parents can and must support the school, I wish to mention especially these two:

1. Send your children early and regularly to school.
2. See to it at home that the necessary repetition and preparation of lessons for school be made.

1. In the first place, send your children to school *at an early age*. On an average, the best time to begin is, when the child has completed its sixth year. True, the little boys and girls will tear more than one primer, and break more than one slate and pencil. The loss is not great, especially when compared with the advantage gained. Through the school itself, through all that the children see and hear in the school room, through the object lessons of the teachers which appeal more to the senses, especially to those of eyes and ears, the mental faculties of the little ones are awakened from slumber and incited to activity. In a very special manner does the memory receive congenial, not too heavy food, and this is of the greatest importance to further education later on, principally for the understanding, which is developed in after years. We priests are better judges in this matter than you parents; and it sometimes, in addition to the labor of instruction, makes on us an impression akin to despair, when boys and girls already from nine to ten years of age, are at last—at last dragged to school. Up to this, they have been growing big and strong in body, like little animals, while the powers of their soul are without all and every development, and, consequently, remain dull and stupid. In such children already we see the truth of the saying — "What Johnny

has not learned when he was a sprig, John will surely not learn when he is grown big." Thanks be to God, such tardiness among Catholic parents is rather the exception. As a rule, even the little children quite gladly go to school, already in tender age. Wherefore, even though there be no exterior laws determining the time in which children *are drafted*, so to speak, *for school service*, as is the case in several other countries, parents, nevertheless, should permit themselves to be prevailed upon by the law of love to send their children to school at a seasonable age, let us say, after the sixth year is completed. But then, also, send them *regularly*. The instruction in school, even though it be slow, proceeds onward from day to day. Now, if a child misses one or perhaps several days, the consequence is, that it finds itself when returning to school so and so many paces behind the others. This discourages it and takes away joy and pleasure from study. The teachers cannot, with one push, hurry the child over the stretch it has not passed itself, the more so, as they are not allowed to take pains with one or other pupil at the expense of the rest. The necessary consequence is, that the irregularity in school attendance puts the child back more and more, until it possesses the melancholy distinction of being first — at the tail end. Then it loses courage, strength and energy to compete with others; it grows stupid, dull-witted, especially if it has been endowed by the Creator with inferior talents. Who is to blame? Now and then, to be sure, God interposes in the attendance at school through sickness among the children, or

in the family. With God we cannot argue. What God does is well done. Moreover, He can bless the subsequent diligence of the child so as to make up for the loss. Not seldom, however, parents, especially mothers, are to blame. Thus, for instance, it just happened to be wash day. Then, and also on other days and on other occasions, there is so much to be done in the house. For the troubled mother the boy, the girl can do many a little turn. Therefore the order is given: "You stay at home to-day, you must help me!" — "But I'll get a punishment, I'll go down in school and lose my place and my good notes." — "I am the one to command you! You stay here! You may tell the teacher or sister, you were sick." (Therefore, also a direct injunction to tell a lie, in the bargain!) Now and then, also, there are children, who do not like to go to school, who would much rather play and even busy themselves with work at home. They are then sly enough to say to the weak mother: "I don't like to go to school, I can't go — because I have a headache!" — This is headache by anticipation! The bad conscience tells the child: "You did not study your task, wherefore, there is punishment in store for you at school." I knew of a girl who quite often, several times a week, had toothache, but strange to say, only in the morning, and invariably from seven to nine o'clock. Then she usually had her head wrapped up and cried and bawled. But as soon as she saw by the clock that school had commenced and that, consequently, she would not have to go, the toothache was as if blown away,

and the bandages were laid aside. The weak, blind mother did not notice anything for a long time. And thus, in similar cases, it is with other mothers. Indeed, it happens, that in the evening when the father who was absent, returns home, mother and child unite to tell him a lie by saying, the latter was in school, when in reality the mother kept it at home. — Parents, especially mothers, take heed to yourselves! What would you do, if the child were not in existence, if it were sick or dead? Then also you would have to manage to get through. Wherefore, arrange accordingly. Order and distribute your work so, as to get through without the help of your children. God will reward you and give you strength and health. And the children by their progress in learning, will give you pleasure and be grateful to you *for having sent them regularly to school.*

2. Moreover, *help and assist the school in the work of instructing the children.* Can you do this? Very easily. See to it with earnestness and love that the children repeat at home, what they have had in school, and that they prepare what they are to study the day following; in other words, see to it that they perform their task and learn their lesson. This is exceedingly important, and, therefore, is desired and recommended by all educational institutions. By preparing its lesson at home, the child must, as it were, meet the teacher half way. Then the teacher can take it by the hand and lead it onward with love and pleasure for both, and especial great profit to the child. But, if the child in the afternoon when school is dismissed, flings

the bag with the books into a corner, it will carry it to school the following morning with a bad conscience and a reluctant heart; and amid all the questions and explanations on the part of the teacher, the darkness and gloom in the noddle of the pupil will continue as dense as in the darkest corner of its school bag. But here is a father or mother who says: "I have no time to do this." I know of Christian mothers, who, whilst they themselves perform some light work, such as preparing the vegetables, or whilst they are sewing, mending, knitting, darning, have the child near them, and let it repeat the lesson of the day, learn that of the following and recite it. I know of certain fathers, who after supper, even though they are tired, find joy and recreation in the same occupation with their children. If they know how to season their effort at the right time with praise, strengthen it with little rewards, excite emulation among brothers and sisters, or also, when necessary, to speak an earnest word, to break a habit of thoughtlessness with quiet and reasonable punishment, to goad on laziness, then they have spent, perhaps, the most enjoyable evening; and, after a short nightprayer, they shall find a restful pillow, which their own and their children's Guardian Angels will arrange so as to afford sweet repose. There are, however, also other families, other parents, where the children run and tear about with boisterous noise in yard and house. The mother at last loses patience. With screeching voice she calls to the children: "You — (no, the words of abuse which proceed from her mouth, I shall not take on my tongue!)

Likewise do I ignore her cold injunction, 'Sit down and learn your lesson!' And still less do I wish to hear the impertinent lie of the children: 'The teacher did not give us a lesson!' Thus the mother. — And now what of the father? But, — is he still to be found at home in the midst of his children? Hardly has he taken his supper in haste and hurry, when he is off again. When he returns, the children are already gone to bed this long while. They could not say good night to him. And in case he stops at home, what does he do? Like a pasha, there he sits, his mind sunken deep in long-columned, good-for-nothing newspapers. Woe to the child, if it disturb father by showing him his school task, its card of merit, or by asking him to hear its lessons. "Get away, I can't bother myself with you! That is why I send you to school." — Imagine to yourselves in this case, what success there will be at school. —

Now and then parents complain: "Our children do not learn anything in school, — make no progress." This may be owing to a cause beyond the control of anybody. If children have been endowed with little talent by the Creator, then parents and teachers must be satisfied with the smallest measure of success in school. But very often the fault of little success in school education is to be sought and also to be found in the family, with the parents.

Wherefore, Christian parents, if you mean well with your children, follow the admonitions I have given you.

Send the children early and regularly to school, and see to it, that they prepare themselves for school just as regularly. If this is done, even children endowed with few or moderate talents, will get along very well. If it is not done, even well-talented children, in a short while, will sink into mediocrity, nay, even below it. You, parents, are the first, the most natural teachers, and appointed by God to be the educators of your children. Only because of many reasons you yourselves cannot give them the necessary instruction, the Church, as a loving mother, offers you the parochial school as an auxiliary and substitutional means. The success, however, of this means, depends upon your co-operation at home. True, a concurrent effort on your part not seldom becomes quite hard; but reflect, that whatever requires no exertion, is not of much account. The thorough instruction which your children receive in school, is for them the best preparation, the most precious portion for the life that is in store for them. The consciousness of having done all within your power to promote this instruction, shall be to you throughout life a fruitful source of sweet consolation and a sure pledge of reward by the Father in Heaven. Amen.

## 6. Preparatory Education for the Period of Life after First Holy Communion.

> Filius sapiens laetificat patrem; filius stultus moestitia est matris suae. Prov. 10, 1.
>
> "A wise son maketh the father glad; but a foolish son is the sorrow of his mother."

Temporal well-being and advancement of children frequently depend, especially in our days, on a good school education. Parents, being the representatives of the Heavenly Father, must look to the former; therefore they must also provide for the latter. For this reason they are obliged to send their children, as we have seen, in *due time* and *regularly* to school. But they must, moreover, at home, in the family, assist the school, work with it hand in hand, by urging the children kindly and earnestly, with praise and reward, or also with reproof and punishment, to study at home, to repeat and prepare their lessons. Wherefore, I entreat and conjure you, Christian parent, do your duty already during the years that children go to school, as I have shown you. What you sow during these years you and your children shall reap in later life.

Now, as a rule, children after the twelfth, thirteenth or fourteenth year, are admitted to their first Holy Communion, and, thereby, released from the obligation of attending school. Do then the parental duties, regarding the preparatory education of children for their life in the world, cease? On the contrary — the saying is: *Little children are little cares; big children are big cares.* Now, properly speaking, begins the real solicitude of parents to the effect, that their children may be enabled to gain a livelihood and advance in the world. Speaking of this subject, let me enter right into every day life and mention from experience only a few points, to which I invite the kind attention of parents, provided that they entertain good wishes toward their children and are desirous of providing reasonably for their temporal prosperity.

Here the following questions arise:

1. Shall parents set their children at hard work immediately after first Holy Communion?
2. Will they not do better, if they seek to perfect their elementary instruction?
3. How can this be done?

1. Time and again have I seen children, especially boys, during the very first days after their first Holy Communion, roam about the streets of the city to look for work and — wages. Indeed, quite according to the spirit of the world! — Is this prudent and reasonable? I am willing to concede, that there are many families so poor and indigent, that the immediate assistance

or co-operation on the part of the child after it has received its first Communion, is desirable, may even necessary, however insignificant this help may be otherwise. In such a case I have nothing to say against the immediate work and earning of wages by children. I only hope that these poor children of indigent parents, may not succumb under the weight of hard work laid upon their young shoulders, and that they may not accept work in places, where innocence, religion and virtue are imperiled. Verily, the loss of these treasures is never counterbalanced by the gain of a few paltry dollars. Concerning this, however, I shall speak an earnest word later on. To-day let me simply ask:

2. **Are, then, really all Catholic parents in** such poor circumstances as to stand in need of the immediate assistance of their children from the day of first Communion? I know distinctly, that **this is not so. But I also know, that many** parents permit themselves to be hoodwinked by blind avarice, and still more, that our youth allow themselves to be carried away, as if with magnetic power, by the blink and chink of a half or quarter **of a dollar. To continue their studies after first** Communion, to educate themselves still more, they are unwilling, because this does not bring in money **at once. Thus the boy who is scarcely a foot** high, who invariably knows everything better and **is master in the house, tells his humble servants,** namely his parents, to their face: "I don't care to," or, "I *will not* go to school any longer and learn. I want to work." And he goes to work, earns for

a long time one or two dollars a week, — hardly enough to pay for his cigarettes and chewing tobacco. Clothes, food, lodging are furnished, of course, quite obediently by his parents. What becomes of the poor boy? He lets the elevator up and down, carries parcels back and forth as errand boy, cleans horse and buggy, shoes and office of some doctor. In the meanwhile he does not learn anything useful or enduring, but he acquires the habit of laziness and loafing about. When sixteen or seventeen years of age, he understands no employment suitable to support himself and to insure his future. Maybe, he starts in at some night-school to make up for the want of education, which he now begins to feel. Yet, apart of the moral danger into which he casts himself at the same time, he possesses no diligence, no perseverance. After a few weeks he gives it up, and then he becomes a loafer who stands all day at the corner, or roves about the streets, always looking for work, but seldom finding any; he gets to be a burden and a disgrace to his poor parents as long as these are still living, and, after their death, a helpless fellow, who at most, by occasional work, ekes out a miserable existence, but never attains a solid fortune, let it be ever so moderate. Tears often start to the eyes of those who love youth, when they see how promising boys become vicious and go to ruin so woefully. Were I to adduce examples, I should not have to go far at all.

3. But what can and should parents do immediately after first Holy Communion to preserve their children from such degeneracy and corruption,

and, on the other hand, to prepare them in a pratical manner for actual life? Let me give you a few hints; to follow them depends on yourselves. I distinguish two cases, according as the children are possessed of inferior intellectual talents, and their parents of less worldly means, and, according as both suppositions are more favorable.

If the children, boys and girls, have received from God, at best, only medium mental faculties; and, besides, if the parents are so situated, that it is difficult, or quite impossible, for them to expend any greater sum of money for additional instruction of their children, I should give them this advice: Send the children, boys and girls, at least yet for one year to school, especially if, according to local custom, they be admitted already with the tenth, eleventh or twelfth year to Holy Communion. This does not cause you too great an expense, and for their future life is highly profitable to the children. For their moral-religious life especially, it is often of very great importance. If you cast the boy, or the girl, directly after first Holy Communion into the roughness of life without, it can easily happen to you as it does to the gardener, who prematurely transplants in spring a tender, precious flower from his hot-house into the open air. One chilling night frost — and the flower is dead! A few months fresh from school — away into the store, into the shop — and the boy, the girl, who before and at Holy Communion gave ground for fairest promises, are also dead! At the grave of their soul the father confessor, and, still more, the Divine Friend of children, the Heavenly

Mother, and the Guardian Angel shed bitter tears, — tears which often are unprofitable, because the life of grace, when once destroyed, shall, perchance, never return. It is shocking and sufficient to raise the hair on one's head, what frightful devastations we must witness, alas, only too often, in children during the first year after their first Holy Communion! But, I will not speak further on this subject to-day.

It is of great utility, even for the *temporal well-being* of children, if they go to school at least another year after their first Holy Communion! The highest classes for boys and girls offer your children a course of instruction, from which, even after first Holy Communion, they can derive very great profit for the life before them. It is precisely at this period, that intellect and judgment of the children have matured so far, that only now they arrive at a proper understanding of the instruction given. Only what they have understood and digested mentally, is and remains their spiritual possession, and for them becomes a capital, which in later life will net them the highest premium. Follow, then, my advice and send your children after their first Holy Communion yet *for one year* to school. Should the thoughtlessness and ignorance of the child protest: "*I don't want to*, don't like to, — I want to go and earn wages," then let it be shown who is master in the house. You, surely, have and ought to have more insight and judgment than the children; these, will later come to the right understanding, and therewith also you will receive gratitude and reward for your pains.

After this first year, or, if absolutely necessary, before or during the same, see to it, that your children, instead of running after little momentary earnings over which they while away the best time, learn to occupy themselves with some reliable employment which will last through life and effectively support and advance them. Wherefore, let girls be employed in ordinary housework, such as sewing, patching, knitting and especially kitchenwork and housekeeping. At the same time it may be useful, after the girl has received, as she certainly must receive, the first direction and training at home from her mother, to give her betime in hire to a good reliable family for greater improvement; for, it will prove quite beneficial that she also eat bread for a time among strangers. There she may learn many a thing which cannot be observed at home.

Thus the Christian virgin prepares herself in a *reasonable* manner for that state to which, perchance, God may call her. But, this kind of preparation, alas, is distasteful to many a frivolous and shortsighted girl. To play clerk in a store, because then one must always appear neat and dressed up in fine clothes and can flirt with the boys unbeknown to parents; to read novels or love stories at home, or to take up some fancy crocheting; to drum on the piano whilst the aged mother is tormenting herself at the wash-tub; never to patch anything, never to mend anything, but to cast the old things away and to purchase the new and latest styles in the store; meanwhile to attend dances, parties, theaters, not for the purpose of

recruiting from work, but simply to while away the time — this is what pleases them. Well, they develop, too, accordingly into mere wax figures, such as one sees hatefully rigged out and standing in show cases!

Possible, that a young man, who is equally as blind as such a girl, may be foolishly smitten with love and marry her. He will soon find out, that he led into his home a quite expensive and very useless doll, but no house-wife. And if nowadays we have only too many girls of this kind, who cast themselves and their entire surroundings into temporal misery (not to mention at all the eternal), who is to blame? For the most part nearly always the parents, especially mothers; then the children. For, also the girls grow to be already in this earthly life, what the parents, the mothers make of them. The girls are not educated for the labors and cares of dry, every-day life. No wonder, they do not accomplish what they ought, and drag others with themselves down in temporal wretchedness.

As to the boys who are not capable of a higher education, fathers will care best for them by having them learn some solid occupation, let us say, a trade, for which they have and show a liking and disposition. By it the boy may not become exactly a millionaire; this, by the way, is not at all necessary for temporal happiness. But, a trade, when thoroughly learnt, will support its master. I am well aware that the raging and rumbling system of factories of to-day, has, to a great extent, dislodged the time-honored proverb which says, "A trade has a golden foundation." Notwith-

standing, I contend, — and, indeed, without being acquainted with your financial condition — even to-day and in this country and everywhere, a reliable employment, a trade is the best means to support a man, and, later on, his family, quietly, safely and in an unfailing manner throughout life. Naturally, this holds good especially, or rather exclusively, of parents and children residing in cities. In the country, gardening and farming offer, I might say, a hereditary family occupation, and in it, also, a hereditary family prosperity, which is often so much the more solid, as it appears outwardly less brilliant.

Let us now suppose the case where children have *better mental capabilities, and that parents possess the means to procure for them a higher grade of education* — what advice, and, to be sure, in the first place regarding their temporal advancement, is to be given?

For the female sex, the practice (or rather evil custom) of latter times has opened many avenues of employment, which formerly had been closed. They can become teachers (also in public schools; why not?), bookkeepers, stenographers, telegraphists, postmistresses etc. Somewhere in the west of the U. S. there is even a woman mayor, and as to female doctors and lawyers, there is no want of them this long while. Very well. There are many ways to Rome, and also many ways to make a living, without necessarily jeopardizing eternal life directly. Therefore I say, if the daughter have inclination and talent to choose for herself, at least for some time, if not for her whole

life, such an occupation which requires the exercise of the mind more than that of the body, and, if parents have the necessary means, then let them send their daughter to a higher educational institution. The best, of course, will be a Catholic one, such as we have them everywhere under the direction of religious sisterhoods. If this cannot be done, because, *e. g.*, a certificate or diploma which can be obtained only at a non-Catholic institution, is required for certain positions, then, certainly, the care for religion and innocence is absolutely necessary; if this care is amply cherished, and having obtained the consent of the priest, there is nothing in the way of attending such an institution.

For other girls who are not willing or able to educate themselves for such an occupation, the attendance at a higher school, lasting, in a favorable case, one or two years after first Holy Communion, is a useless waste of time, if not, besides, a vain ostentation, dangerous to their entire after life. And this I say quite openly into the face of the fashion and evil custom of to-day. Everywhere, time and again, one hears and reads how the most experienced and best meaning men give expression to the complaint, that even Catholic parents, especially vain mothers, follow more and more the evil practice of modern age, and send their daughters to academies and high schools, let them be ever so incapable of learning something better and higher than what was offered them in the parochial school. I pity these poor girls. The polish, which they compelled themselves to assume

at the high school, will soon be worn off in the roughness of every-day life that awaits them, and then there remains for the parents, and, later, for the husband, nothing more of the well and highly educated mademoiselle with her grand certificate of graduation and her prize medals in gold and silver, than a woman, who is no housewife, because she never learned anything of the cares and labors of a housewife, and a mother, who is no mother, no Christian mother, because she does not understand anything of a Christian-like, religious bringing up of children.

And what is, in the meantime, done for the boys, I mean, the more talented boys? It happens but too often that the daughters take the cream of the milk, whilst the boys must content themselves with the sour leavings. And yet, fathers ought to place their happiness and pride in procuring for their sons, (always, of course, supposing that these possess sufficient mental endowments) a higher education, an education which will enable them to secure for themselves more influential and better paying positions in human society. Or, shall and will our Catholic young men, in the order of rank among human society remain yet a long time mere scullions and pack carriers, as, heretofore, they often have been and still are? Where, pray, have we at the head of any large enterprize, or business concern, Catholic men of appreciably important influence? And why not? Are Catholic young men on an average wanting in talent, energy and perseverance of will? Experience and history prove the contrary. Up to this, the explanation,

let us say the excuse, lay in a by no means commendable modesty, or rather, timidity of Catholics towards an all-grasping influence of their adversaries, and here in this new world, in the strangeness of the surroundings with which Catholic immigrants first had to become acquainted before they could settle down. In the beginning, for a long time, they had to struggle for the first necessaries of life; through genuine industry, however, and Christian frugality, many have advanced themselves into rather easy circumstances. Now, if such fathers have received from the Heavenly Father sons with good intellectual qualifications, they ought to consider it a duty of love and honor to give these sons a higher education. An opportunity, thanks be to God, they will find nowadays everywhere, near and far. Not to mention European countries, there are in many places of the Union establishments of this kind for higher instruction, which are supported either by the Rt. Rev. Bishops, or male religious orders, or even by individual priests. The charges for pupils in attendance are placed so low, that everyone will have to concede, that these institutions are run not for the purpose of money making, but are conducted rather amidst sacrifices, yea, heavy sacrifices for the education of youth. These colleges mostly offer pupils a twofold course, the so-called classical and commercial courses. Pupils receive the very best training in the classical course, because it aims more at a formal and thorough education of all the powers of the mind, and, also, objectively prepares for the higher professions of medicine,

law or also the priesthood. Should this appear too long and slow for some students, who, it would seem, are driven by American steam, — and should the father be unable to curb the impetuosity of his son, he will find in a commercial course all that can qualify him for a better situation in life from a business point of view. These Catholic institutions are, as yet, young, comparatively speaking; but, already from several of them have gone forth, besides able priests, also thorough men of public life, who command a wide respect and influence.

The degree, in which this can come to pass in a still greater measure, and consequently, the degree and extent in which our rising Catholic youths shall work themselves up into even materially better positions and greater influence in social life, depends chiefly on the energy of the young men themselves, and on the kind assistance, directed by Christian prudence, on the part of parents, especially fathers.

Wherefore, Christian parents, fathers, avail yourselves in behalf of your sons, of the opportunity, which is presented to you and to them by the kind providence of the Heavenly Father.

The advice and hints, — different according to various circumstances and in keeping with them, — which I have given you in regard to the education of your children, are no mere illusive or glittering fantasy, but are taken from real life, practical, sincere and well-meant. We priests love your children not less than you do your-

selves. Our desire, our prayers and labors, our hope and joy, consist with us, as with you, in this, to make them happy both for time and for eternity. Amen.

## 7. Rights and Duties of Parents in regard to Children when choosing a Vocation.

> Et ecce, unus accedens ait illi: Magister bonus, quid boni faciam, ut habeam vitam aeternam? Matth. 19, 16.
>
> "And behold, one came and said to him: Good master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?"

Parents who are desirous of preparing their children for the battle of life, must, in the first place, provide them with a good school training; therefore they must send the children early and regularly to school, and *second at home* the efforts of the school. When children have passed through the elementary school, there begins for parents the far greater care of directly preparing them for practical life. I have — taking them from real life — given you a short time ago some counsels and suggestions, the observance of which will prove highly useful to yourselves and your children; therefore I briefly repeat them once more: 1. If possible, send your children to the parochial school one year after they have received their first Communion. In case poverty compels you

to draw immediately on their help by means of work and wages, take care, as much as can be done, that they do not accept work in places which endanger virtue and innocence. 2. If children are endowed with rather inferior talents for study, endeavor, by counsel and action, that they learn, as soon as possible, some reliable trade, even though it do not net as great a pay at first, as other employment, where children trifle away the time best suited to learn and exercise what is useful and necessary, and thus waste away later on without work and without an occupation to gain a livelihood. 3. If children have good talents and you have sufficient means, provide them, especially the boys, with a higher education, which will enable them to secure a higher and better situation in human society or social life.

During the years of which I speak, children gradually come to the time where they choose for themselves an individual state or vocation, which they are to follow throughout life. This choice of a state of life is a very important question, and one which decides the problem of happiness or misfortune for time and eternity. We might discuss it later, when we shall consider the duties of parents towards children as to their life in eternity. But as in this question time and eternity, *i. e.*, the happiness for time and eternity are closely connected, we will mention it here immediately.

1. What do we understand by "state of life", or "vocation" of children?
2. What is the position of parents regarding this important question?

1. *State* is a permanent, firm *station* of life, which the heavenly Father in His wisdom and providence assigns to each of your children, to last throughout this earthly existence; a *definite way*, by which every pilgrim here on earth shall return to his Heavenly Father's house; the *place in the vineyard*, which the Heavenly Gardener allots to each individual for cultivation; the *position* on the *battle field*, in which each single warrior must secure to himself by fight the crown of victory and the royal throne in the heavenly kingdom; in short, it is *the will of God*, of the Lord and Creator, in regard to the direction of the whole life upon earth. For, subject to this Divine Will, are not only individual actions down to the thoughts, desires and words of man, but also far more, the state of life which man embraces. To God belongs the entire tree, not merely the single fruits; the whole stream, not merely the single drops; in short, the *entire* man, with body and soul, with all that he is and possesses. From this truth of reason and faith, the following flows directly:

It is the duty of every man before determining the choice of a state of life, to find out what the will of God is in regard to it. The two means for this are prayer for enlightenment from above, and individual meditation and reflection. The most appropriate prayer to be said zealously and for a long time by young people is suggested to them by the question addressed by the young man to the Divine Saviour: "Good Master, what good shall I do (*i. e.* what state of life shall I choose), that I may have life everlasting?" (Matth. 19, 16.) This

reflection, according to right reason, which, after all, is nothing else than the light of God in man, with which God Himself directs the human being, must clearly and immovably be centered on the last end of this life, namely, eternal life, and quietly and seriously consider—"What state offers to me personally the best means and the least difficulties to serve God here upon earth and thus to gain eternal life? Which state of life is for me the safest road to heaven?"—This is the well-known question of St. Aloysius: "What does this (this or that state of life) profit me unto eternity?"—a question every Christian, yea, every sensible man ought ask himself before each individual action, and therefore, even more so, before the choice of a state of life. Supposing you have to reach some end essential to your prosperity, all depends on whether you choose the right and safe way to that end. This is both human and divine prudence and wisdom; the opposite is unreasonable and foolish and avenges itself by failure to encompass one's end. Very many among mankind are throughout their whole life-time unhappy, discontented, and at its termination, miss their last end, which is heaven, because they cast themselves into this or that state or vocation blindly and without reflection. They did not stop to consider: 'What does this state profit me unto eternal life?'—but only: 'What does it profit me in regard to riches, comfort, enjoyment, pleasure?' They are like people who are about to transact an all-important business, and for this purpose must go from Cleveland to New York, but take instead of this the train to Chicago.

But how many states of life are there? Essentially different states there are but two, namely, the state of the *commandments* and the state of the *evangelical counsels*. In both, however, there are many, not essentially, but only accidentally, different kinds, which I might call *species of vocation*.

This distinction is not derived from human would-be wisdom, but directly from the *life* and *words* of the Divine Saviour, Who in all and for all things, has become to us an example and teacher. During thirty years He led a hidden life in Nazareth. Necessary prayers, faithful discharge of the most ordinary occupation of a carpenter, above all, most perfect obedience toward His Mother and Fosterfather—this was *His state*, and this His state was a most beautiful type of the *state of the commandments*, in which by far the greatest number of His disciples, or Christians, follow Him, and shall thus one day come to be united with Him in heaven. But already in His twelfth year He, of His own accord, leaves father and mother, and thus severs the bonds with which the fourth commandment ties the child to its parents, in order to follow the higher call of the Heavenly Father. He thus directs our attention to a higher perfection, to which we all *are bound* to aspire. His *public life* is free from all earthly, even the most sacred bonds; He consecrates it solely to the service of the Heavenly Father: He seeks nothing earthly in it, but has in view solely the greater glory of God and the salvation of His brethren; thus He ex-

presses this *perfect* life more clearly and puts it up as a model for those, who, carried away by His love and lovableness, and confiding in His grace, do not content themselves with the mere keeping of His commandments, but also answer His invitation with St. Peter: "Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou shalt go." (Matth. 8, 19.)

And not alone in His own life did the Saviour express this essential difference between the state of the commandments and that of a higher perfection, but He *teaches* and *explains* it also to the young man, who consulted Him as to his choice of a state of life. "If thou wilt enter into life," He said to him (Matth. 19, 17), "keep the commandments." The good young man replied: "All these have I kept from my youth; what is yet wanting to me? What was *necessary* I have done; I have kept myself faithfully in the *state of commandments;* is there yet a *higher perfection*, after which I can strive?" Lovingly Jesus answered: "If thou wilt be *perfect*, — it is not necessary for a mere attainment of heaven, — go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow me."

Wherefore, there are, as we have seen clearly and distinctly, two essentially different states of life: the *state of commandments* which all *must* observe who would go to heaven, and *the state of higher perfection* for those, who, not content with what is only necessary, but observing the *counsels* of voluntary poverty, virginity and obedience, proposed in the Gospel, are desirous to follow their Divine Master and Leader more closely and

more perfectly than is absolutely necessary for admission into heaven, in order thus also to stand one day higher and nearer to their King in heaven. The state of commandments, generally speaking, is the state of Christians, who according to the will of God, spend their life in the world. The state of perfection, (mark well, the *state* of perfection, not the personal, individual perfection itself), is the religious state within the Catholic church; it is called "state," because in the Catholic church the observance of the three evangelical counsels is established firmly and permanently by means of vows. Intermediate between the state of commandments and that of perfection, stands, as a harmonious connecting link and transitional grade, the vocation of a *secular priest*, which we may call a state, inasmuch as it receives by the vow of voluntary virginity as also by the vow of obedience toward the Bishop, a firm and permanent character superior to that of the commandments.

There are, however, *various kinds of vocation* in the state of commandments. The different occupations and trades do not alter the *state* of commandments; in like manner, the various orders and religious congregations do not change the *state* of perfection. The physician, the lawyer, the artisan, all follow the *state* of commandments; the Jesuit, the Franciscan, the sister who teaches a school, the Sister of Charity in the hospital, all have chosen the state of perfection. Into seven colors the sun divides its light. The Heavenly Sun for us pilgrims on earth, is the God-Man and His

divine-human life. Just because it is infinitely holy, its splendor falls upon the eyes of the beholder in countless rays, all leading to Him, the Eternal Sun of Heaven, as St. John viewed the God-Man in heaven.

2. Now, if we ask in keeping with our consideration of parental duties, what have parents to observe concerning their children's choice of a state of life, it will be plain at once, that parents *have not the right, and, therefore, still less the duty, to decide the choice of one of the two states by themselves, without or even against the consent of their children.* For as we have seen, the state of life is to each individual human being the will of God, the position, the station which God, being the supreme and unlimited Lord and Master of the individual, as well as of the whole human family, assigns to each. This choice, therefore, falls within the domain of personal freedom, which even parents must respect. The son, the daughter have to settle the choice of a state of life with themselves and God, and are responsible to God alone for such election. Father and mother are not permitted to say to the child: "Thou *shalt* and *must* choose the state of commandments," or, as the expression goes, "stay in the world," or: "Thou *shalt* go to the convent, thou *shalt* become a priest." This would be most detestable tyranny of conscience. And, as parents have not the right to dictate the choice of the state of commandments, nor of perfection, so, too, they have no right to forbid the same and to say: "I forbid you to remain in the world, or to embrace

the state of perfection." This tyranny may manifest itself openly or covertly. It possesses its various degrees, descending from a positive command or denial to threats, expressions of displeasure, refusal of consent or of material assistance. At all events, this is a proof, that parents, who become guilty of such faults, do not love their children sincerely, neither for God's sake, nor as children of God, neither supernaturally nor for heaven's sake, but that self-seeking and worldly interests have deadened this love in their hearts, or, at least, greatly enfeebled it.

But what are parents allowed, nay, what must parents do in regard to this choice of their children? Here we shall have to distinguish whether there be question of the choice of one of the two states, or, after a choice has been made, whether there be question only about an election of one or other vocation in the first or second state. If the child be about to make a choice between the state of commandments or that of perfection, parents, as the best friends and the God-appointed counselors of the child, may and must seriously and repeatedly ask and charge it, to ponder the matter maturely, to take counsel with its father confessor, (who is acquainted with its interior and has to direct the soul in the place of God), — and, above all, to pray long and humbly and with confidence to God: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? (Acts, 9, 6.) I, Thy child, will and must go to Thee in heaven; show me on what way Thou desirest to lead me back to Thee; whether on that of the commandments, or that of perfection." — Young

people will find, as experience proves, a very good opportunity for such earnest reflection and continuous prayer in the devotion of the Six Sundays in honor of St. Aloysius. This youthful saint chose his state of life according to the only accurate principle, namely: "What does this profit me unto eternity?" In order to obtain help he had to pray during many long years before he reached his vocation. Precisely for this reason, several Roman Pontiffs, — therefore, representatives of Christ — have proclaimed him to be the mightiest patron of youth, especially for a choice of life and the preservation of chastity, and, for the purpose of promoting veneration for him, have granted for each of the Six Sundays a plenary indulgence. Wherefore, parents will do very well to hold their grown up children to the observance of the Six Sundays. I know of parents who observe them with and for their children. If other parents will not and cannot do this, they should at least assist their children by frequent prayer during the important time of electing a state of life. Were parents and children always to pray thus in common, we should much oftener than nowadays, have a happy choice of a state of life, — happy, because it decides all happiness for time and eternity. We have enough of cases where the selection of a state of life or vocation has proved to be an unhappy one, and thence also, no want of misfortune and dissatisfaction, murmuring and complaining in all positions of human society, and, regarding the hereafter, more than enough perils and misgivings as to eternal

salvation. Do not think that I desire to urge by my remark a choosing of the state of perfection. I merely mention to you clear, irrefutable principles, the observance or non-observance of which is of the greatest utility or disadvantage to all whom it concerns, parents and children. To elucidate this point as clearly as possible, the following is herewith firmly established. It is true, that many cases of genuine vocation to the state of perfection and of the priesthood are a good sign for the moral-religious condition of a congregation, *i. e.*, of youth and parents, and a rich source of honor, happiness and blessing for the congregation at large, families as well as individuals. For the same reason it is also true, if resolutions of this kind are never taken, or only rarely, especially where sodalities exist for young people, this throws no favorable light upon the congregation and its sodalities. This is not my personal judgment, but that of the most experienced spiritual masters; and these, surely, have a more correct judgment as to the question of a choice of a state of life, than you, around and over whose head and heart the world in which you live, has drawn a very narrow and low horizon. If among the numerous youth of a large congregation or sodality, the Divine Saviour does not find a single soul that would listen to His invitation: "If thou wilt be perfect, come, follow me," the conclusion must be drawn by everyone acquainted with human nature, that here religious sentiment, cheerful piety, active love for Jesus and Mary and a soul-

stirring spirit of sacrifice for the highest and most noble interests of God and immortal souls, are not to be found, and the reason for it is to be sought with the parents and their grown up children.

It is, finally, true — and St. Ignatius asserts this repeatedly in his Exercises — that the priest, the father confessor, does a very good and meritorious work, if he directs to the state of perfection persons, whom he considers fit, after having gained an accurate knowledge of the spiritual, religious-moral condition of their soul. In such a case he does not do anything else but what the Saviour said and did to the young man in the Gospel, and in him to all the youth of all times. Indeed, the conscientious priest *must* do this, because he is obliged to preach the *whole* Gospel; the priest only does not perform and determine the choice: this everyone must do for himself.

So much for the choice of the state of commandments, or that of perfection. Very often, indeed, for the greater part of mankind this choice presents no difficulty: for, certainly, God desires to lead the majority of people to heaven on the way of the commandments, and directs them to it through interior dispositions and exterior circumstances, without even as much as addressing to them the invitation to the state of perfection.

Now if all these allow themselves to be guided on the way of the commandments by the wise and loving hand of God, there is question for them only as to a selection of a fixed *vocation* within the state of commandments, *e. g.*, whether they shall

remain single or enter matrimony, or whether they shall learn this or that trade or business. This question, *generally speaking*, is not of such importance for the entire happiness in time and eternity. However, also here let children and parents pray to God for enlightenment. As a rule, both, after having reflected quietly and reasonably, will recognize the will of God through the circumstances with which He surrounds individuals. Inclination, love, talent for this or that occupation, circumstances and traditions of the family, the greater or smaller pecuniary means of parents, the business condition of time and place, if well pondered, will give clear hints as to a good choice. After this, it belongs to parents, especially to the fathers, to assist and help, by their experience and knowledge of practical life, the children, especially the sons, that they learn well and thoroughly some reliable employment, which, with God's aid, can lead them later on through life, when they become independent of the parents. The pains taken and the financial sacrifices made by parents in behalf of this training of their children for practical life will repay parents and children later on better, than if the ignorance of parents in league with the ignorance and thoughtlessness of their children, neglects this preparatory education in seasonable time, and parents console themselves with the excuse — 'After our death the children are to receive a goodly inheritance which we have saved for them. More than once did I observe that children, who had received a large fortune, became indigent, poor, and miserable; while children, who had

received no portion whatever, bravely worked themselves up by means of what they had thoroughly learned under the wise direction of their parents.

Wherefore, beloved parents, observe these duties which the Heavenly Father has imposed upon you as regards your children's choice of a state of life and vocation. Pray, reflect, advise, assist and effectively take a hand in, when and wherever it is needed. Thus alone you will prove yourselves good parents, who in firmly establishing the happiness of their children, find their own happiness and a sure hope of the bliss of heaven. Amen.

## 8. Defective and Excessive Solicitude for the Worldly Welfare of Children.

Quaerite primum regnum Dei et eius justitiam. Matth. 6, 33.

"Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His justice."

The obligations which the heavenly Father imposes on parents for the *temporal welfare* of children, we have already discussed, at least in their most important bearings. On the whole, they are fulfilled by the prayers, the advice and the assistance with which parents aid their children in the choice of a state of life. The fulfilment of these duties constitutes a great part of the virtue peculiar to the state of parents. Now, every virtue, so theologians say, keeps itself intermediate between the extremes of excess and defect. In order to conclude the meditations on the first part of the obligations incumbent on the parental state, let us, then, see how parents may be at fault:

1. by defective,
2. by excessive solicitude for the temporal welfare of their children.

1. As far as the defective care is concerned, I have already mentioned in the fourth sermon, what

was most necessary. Defective industriousness and frugality very easily become real sins for parents. But too often these sins are committed and acquired during the time before marriage. To live swimmingly and gaily from day to day; to squander the few pennies earned, in revel and riot, in pride and vain luxury, such is not merely a possibility, but a real fact with our unmarried youth. How many young men, on the evening of their wedding day in lieu of a thoroughly well-filled bank book, have an exceedingly limp and consumptive looking pocket book! And how many young ladies on the same evening, instead of a supply of durable clothing and linen which lasts for years, have nothing but a heap of useless trumpery (inclusive of the wedding dress with its long train) which perhaps after a few weeks they will sell for a couple of pennies to the rag-picker! Here want and poverty enter in already on the day of the wedding, and, in a short time, grow so mighty, that they peer out from every corner and, with cruel hand, seize upon the God-given children at their very entrance into the world. And this is not a poverty which God has sent, and, therefore, can become a blessing; but it is sinful in its origin, and, consequently, fraught with evil. This is the sort of poverty which nowadays, especially in larger cities, and not merely in the very lowest, but even in the somewhat higher strata of human society, is gaining more and more, and levying recruits for socialism.

More grievous does the sin of parents become, if, after they are blessed with children, they be

unwilling to learn and exercise industry and economy. Lazy and labor-shirking fathers, or even fathers, who do not hesitate to carry a great portion of their wages to places of amusement, instead of bringing it home where every penny is badly needed: mothers who kill hours at a time by gossiping and gadding, instead of keeping their small or large household in order; mothers, who in vain pride for themselves and their children, throw out at the window, what the father by sour labor has earned and brings in through the door — such parents are not too numerous among Catholics, but to all intents and purposes, nevertheless too frequently to be met with. Their sin is very grievous; for *if any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel* (1. Tim. 5, 8). *He has denied the faith*, because he tramples under foot the positive law of God; *he is worse than an infidel*. For there is question here of a law of nature, *i. e.* a law, which the Creator has indelibly engraved in human nature, and which, in the instinct of animals that care for their young with admirable affection, presents to our eyes the most wondrous disposition of divine Providence.

Wherefore, Christian parents, mark well. If once blessed with children, you are the God-appointed servants of His Providence. Through you the heavenly Father desires to nourish, clothe, bring up your and His children and to prepare them for life in this world. The recollection of these duties, the labors and cares, which do not last a few weeks or months, but throughout an

entire life, should not deter those who, after mature deliberation and thorough preparation, consider themselves called to the state of matrimony. The heavenly Father who imposes these obligations, will also give the strength to fulfil them. The holy sacrament of matrimony confers special graces to fulfil these obligations and to impart strength and perseverance. And after all, the chief affair is, that heaven must be earned. The cares and labors of parents, even only for the temporal well-being of children, are an excellent title of right, a Christ-given claim to a rich reward in heaven. This thought must console and strengthen you, especially when — alas! as it often happens — you should get to feel the ingratitude of your children. The Heavenly Father and the Celestial Brother of your children, are not ungrateful, but will reward you with divine liberality.

2. But how can parental solicitude as to the temporal well-being of children be excessive? In the first place, if it *be too fretful and without a firm confidence in God*. I scarcely dare even only hint at a terrible crime, — ofttimes practiced for years, — to which this excessive solicitude for the support of a large number of children nowadays carries many parents, even such as wish to be accounted Christians. The devil reaps an unfailing harvest for hell in premeditated infanticides, (it matters not at what period, or, if openly or secretly perpetrated), and in those venal instruments, who by word or deed co-operate in this crime. Woe to such parents! Branded as murderers, they shall, if they do not repent, stand on the last day in view

of the whole world and burn as murderers eternally amid the flames of hell!

Christian parents, where is your faith? Are not your children God's children? Are they not more than the birds of the air and the lilies of the field? Has not God engraven you and them into His very hands, so that He could not forget you at all, parents and children, even if He would? And is not all the love you bestow upon your children in comparison with His love, what the warmth of a candle is, compared to that of the sun? Therefore follow His admonition: Work and pray. *Work and economize, i. e.* do what you can do, — and *pray.* You above all, can pray in fullest truth: Our Father, give us this day our daily bread. Then God will help you and your children.

Wherefore, do not give way to excessive, fretful solicitude, clouded by distrust! Further more, the care for the temporal welfare of children, must not *occupy the first place* in your thoughts and endeavors. Uppermost in your mind and actions must be the care for their eternal welfare, consequently, for christian-religious education. Here, too, holds good: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice.* In the world your children dwell but a short period of time; what matters it, whether in a mud cabin or in a handsome mansion, whether in the coarse blouse of labor or in silk and gold? *One thing is necessary.* And this one thing is, that, as much as it depends on yourselves, you lead them back to heaven. And here Christian parents sin often and much, oftentimes without judging it to be a sin on their part, nay, even persuading themselves

that they are but doing their duty. The occupation of Martha, when she was waiting upon Jesus and His disciples, was certainly very praiseworthy. And yet Jesus rebukes her: "*Thou art careful and art troubled about many things; but one thing is necessary.*" Care for temporal welfare and advancement of children is good, and indeed, a duty of parents. And yet I fear, that the same Jesus at the particular judgment, will have to say to the departing soul of many a father and mother: You have faithfully fulfilled the duties as to the terrestrial well-being of your children. Fain would I now reward you therefor. But I cannot. For, amid the solicitude as to the earthly welfare of your children, you have neglected the far more important one as to their eternity. For the former I have rewarded you with temporal blessings on earth; for neglecting the duties concerning heaven, I must now punish you in eternity.

The faults which many parents commit in this regard are of various kinds, all proceeding from excessive solicitude for terrestrial goods, with which the infernal spirits seek to draw away mankind in its blindness from the necessary care of heaven. I draw your attention immediately to the so-called *settling down for life*, *i. e.* to the *marriage* of children, and then to the *inheritance* which is to be left them.

The *settlement of children*, especially of daughters by getting married, certainly belongs to the designs of Providence. I tell the candidates of matrimony in every instruction before marriage, that this settlement for life is one of the ends of holy matri-

mony, and show them the obligations which the attainment of this end imposes on both. But now does it follow from this, that parents shall take all possible and impossible pains, to tow as it were, their children, especially their daughters into the harbor of matrimony? Not at all. And yet, one should think so, when you cannot help but see and hear how so many parents act towards their children. All faults and evil features of company-keeping, which we shall have to discuss later, and which parents are obliged to prevent and remove, for the most part come from the excessive parental solicitude of seeing their children by all means married. To select a few cases: — There is a girl of some fifteen or sixteen years, tagging after the boys if these do not run after her. The parents see, permit, yes, even promote it. Why? Oh, later on the girl will not get anybody! All theatres, balls, parties, excursions the girl must take in of course. Why? "O" say the parents, "here acquaintanceships are formed." And the Guardian Angels and Jesus and Mary say: "Woe to you and your children, because of such acquaintances which are concluded in places of this sort, mostly amid the giddiness of blinded passion!" The daughters bedeck themselves according to the latest style, and, of course, far beyond their station and means. Parents, true, complain somewhat, but only a little, and that, very silently. Heaving a sigh, they, especially mothers, excuse themselves and their daughters with: "Well — it has to be so! The dress makes the woman, and dress attracts attention." — Certainly, it attracts and captivates, but

at most only purblind dudes, not sensible, solid sharp-sighted young men. — At last, the daughter succeeds in getting a fellow, and it really looks as though sooner or later, something might become of the matter. Now, once or twice a week they both walk or sit together for hours and hours in the dark. This, out of a hundred cases, easily is ninety-nine times the *proximate* occasion for many, mostly grievous sins, and these sins draw down infallibly the curse of God on both for time and, probably, also for eternity. And what about the parents, the father with his authority, and the mother with her maternal solicitude? "Well" say they "we don't like it. We also have admonished and asked the daughter not to sit up so late. But as for the rest, we can trust her. She surely will not do anything evil. As for the young man, we certainly cannot order him to go home, nor dare we molest him by remaining with them in the room; otherwise he will feel offended and not come again. This will break our daughter's heart, and then she will be left!" — This, indeed, is providing for a daughter through thick and thin, at any price, even at the cost of innocence! Miserable parents! Unhappy children!

Again, the daughter keeps company; with whom? With a Lutheran, Methodist, or heathen who is not even baptized! And what do the parents say? "We should like it better of course, if our daughter would marry a Catholic. But she is getting up in years, and we are growing old. Bequeath to her we can but little, or, nothing. So we would like to see her provided for, before

our death. And the young man? He is not Catholic, but still neat, nice and polite, — comes from a decent family, with a good and steady income. Besides, he says expressly, that he does not care about religion: that concerning it, the daughter may do as she pleases." Such is the language of parents which, in their blind love of the world, they not seldom utter even to the face of the priest, who, try as he may, cannot succeed in couching the cataract, or removing the scales from their eyes. But with a love, which is higher than every wordly love; with a love which more surely than every love of the world renders happy for time and eternity, I say to you, parents and children, frankly and openly into your face: Rather would I that your children after your death should go to the poor house, than that they enter upon a mixed marriage! — Let us omit particular cases.

This much is certain — that precisely in the *provision* made for children, very many parents sin, because, whilst they are solicitous for the interests of time, they neglect the care for those of eternity. Not a few parents act quite similarly in regard to the *provision for a temporal inheritance*. How often did I have to hear from the mouth of such parents, (in this connection, especially fathers): — "I commenced with nothing, had to work hard, torment myself and suffer want. Thanks be to God, I had success. During my lifetime and after my death, I can leave my children in a situation, which is ten and twenty times better than I had when I started out." That is very nice and not to be despised. Indeed, we may regard it as a very legitimate am-

bition of parents, if they have care for the more remote future of their children, even, after their death. Yet, also here must the priest endeavor to check with the words of Christ's admonition: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice.*" What you parents do for the temporal advancement of children even beyond your death, is proximately an effusion of natural love. At your death you shall receive the reward therefor, but only in proportion to the purity of this love. Now your love is much purer and more pleasing to God, hence, also far more meritorious, if you contribute of the earthly means which God has given you, very liberally for the interests of God and His church. These donations will bear you much higher interest unto heaven. But, if in this respect you are miserly or even only somewhat backward, again and again excusing yourselves: "We must save and keep it for the children," your love is an inordinate one, and at your death you may very easily find out, that your money and estate have remained on earth, perhaps only to be squandered frivolously by your children, while for your soul you have sent little ahead, or, maybe, nothing at all. Besides, by no means can you console yourself with the evasive answer: "In my last will I shall bequeath something for good purposes and Masses for my soul." For, in the first place, who guarantees to you that your testament shall not, by your own children, be attacked and broken and thus remain unfulfilled? There is, forsooth, no want of detestable examples even in Catholic families. And even though your children do not

act thus, the legacies which death dictates, as it were, to the pen of the notary, have by far not so great a merit for heaven as the least contribution, given during life of your own accord and out of pure love. And, if you make your bequest only for the purpose of having a couple of Masses said for your soul, then these, let us hope, will help to liberate you more speedily out of purgatory; they cannot, however, increase the *merit proper for heaven*, and, hence, also not the reward in heaven.

Therefore, parents, recollect the saying: "An ordinate love begins with one's own self." However near your children may be to you, your soul is still nearer to you; be solicitous for it above all. And as concerns the children, have care for their temporal welfare, and, also, for an inheritance after your death. But reflect well — before and above the earthly inheritance, which, after all, is not less perishable than the mere sheet of paper belonging to the notary, you must have placed into the hearts of the children an imperishable legacy. This legacy is the Catholic faith and a life according to faith, to which you have trained your children both by word and example. Possessing this inheritance your children shall be more than wealthy, even though you cannot leave them a red cent. But without it, they are poor, beggarly poor, even if you should bequeath to them thousands upon thousands. Wherefore, amid all the solicitude for the temporal welfare of your children, ponder well the words: Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice. Amen.

## 9. Introduction into the Christian Religion. Care for Baptism.

> Nisi quis renatus fuerit ex aqua et Spiritu Sancto, non potest introire in regnum Dei.
>
> Joan. 3, 5.
>
> "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter in the kingdom of God."

Thus far, in the sermons on parental duties, we have considered children, who are the subject of these discourses, chiefly as to their bodily being, in their temporal destination as citizens of this world, as members of human society. All the cares and toils which parents, as the representatives of God, have to endure for the health, temporal welfare and advancement of their children, are, of course, not the most important. Nevertheless, they are actual duties, imposed by Almighty God; duties, from the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of which, as a rule, depends the temporal weal or woe of children — therefore duties, which shall surely come up for strict examination before the judgment-seat of God. Of far greater, nay, of absolutely the greatest, of decisive im-

portance, are the duties as to the soul, or concerning the heavenly destiny of the child. The body you, parents, give to the child, because you are the immediate instruments of the Almighty. The soul God creates out of nothing, sends it upon this earth, unites it with the body and, indeed, with this only intention, that after a short probation and preparation, it shall return to His paternal heart and eternally partake of His bliss and glory in the abode of heaven. Such is the proper and ultimate destiny of the child. And the proper and ultimate duty of parents is *to lead the children back to heaven, whence they came.* Proximately and directly, this concerns the soul, but, also, the body, which, after the resurrection, will share in the lot of the soul.

This duty, in order to give you a preliminary, brief outline, comprises a fourfold task. Parents must, 1., bring their children on to the way that leads to heaven; 2., preserve them by watchfulness from going astray from this road; 3., urge them onward by punishment, if necessary, on the straight path, and 4., draw them forward by their own good example.

Let us see to-day,

1. in general the obligation of parents to bring their children on the way that leads to heaven, and
2. the care to have them receive baptism, which may be regarded as the starting point of this way.

1. That parents must bring and place the child on the way to heaven, needs no proof. The little

infant for years, indeed, is without the proper use of its mental faculties. As a rational being and in respect to its life's destiny, it is more helpless than mere brute animals who in their instinct possess a safe regulator of life. Immediately at the birth of the child, parents must say to themselves: This now is our infant, but still more the child of God. As the representatives of God, we must bring it on the way that shall lead it back to God. *Now which is this way?* Christ gives us a clear and definite answer (John 3, 36): *I am the way, the truth and the life . . . . I am the door . . . . He that believeth in the Son, hath life everlasting, but he that believeth not in the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (Jno. 3, 36 sqq.) Therefore Jesus Christ, *i. e.*, the entire religion of Christ with all its truths, precepts, graces and means of graces, the religion of Christ committed by Him to the one church which He founded, — in a word, the Roman Catholic religion or church: this is the way, and the only way to heaven. Hence, to bring the children on the path to heaven, means nothing else than to introduce them into the Roman Catholic religion or church.

By the way, (for it cannot be mentioned too often) is this truth taken to heart by those young men and women who cast themselves thoughtlessly into a *mixed marriage?* In such a matrimonial union the Catholic party alone finds itself on the right way, while the non-Catholic is on the path of error knowingly or unknowingly. Hence, a mixed marriage is like a span of horses, that tug in opposite directions: the Catholic party, if all goes

well, pulls straight upward, whilst the non-Catholic draws on towards its erring byways. Under such circumstances, is there any founded hope that life's chariot containing the children, will move upwards to heaven, or, rather, is there not occasion for distressing fear, lest it be pulled on to the byways of error to the right and to the left, especially on to the broad road of indifference towards all religions! Such consideration must urge at least thoroughly Catholic young men and maidens to form this resolution: "We want more than only a contract for life and provision; we want a union which gives us security that we and our children shall go to heaven. This guaranty we have only when the Catholic church bestows on our Catholic marriage union her maternal benediction. Wherefore, we had rather not get married at all, than to expose ourselves and the children to the perils of a mixed marriage!"—

Now, if we return to what is incumbent on parents in order to lead their children to religion and the church, we shall find

2. that the first introduction must be effected *by holy baptism*. In reference to baptism, there are many points which truly Catholic parents must deeply take to heart. Above all, they must be thoroughly penetrated with the conviction, *that holy baptism is for them and their children an invaluable grace*. What is the child in its natural birth? In its whole appearance, the most helpless creature, as to its interior, a slave of satan, an enemy of God. What does it become through baptism? The exorcism of the priest compels

satan to surrender this child. The Triune God infuses into the soul of the child sanctifying grace and the treasures of its concomitant virtues, which are more precious than all the gold and silver of the whole visible creation. The infant of a beggar, when carried from the baptismal font back into the mud cabin of its parents, is a prince of heaven, whilst the unbaptized child of a heathen emperor, is, in reality, the poorest beggar child. Oh, that Christian parents could see these treasures, this dignity of their infant after it has been baptized!

If they would but look with the eyes of faith into the soul of their baptized infant and consider with blissful gratitude the wonders wrought therein by the Triune God! Many, many a fault would be avoided right at the outset!

Let me mention here some of the most important moments. In the first place, parents *cannot be too careful, lest the child be deprived of the grace of baptism*. If the child dies without being baptized, it can never attain to an immediate vision of God, and therefore, also never to the possession of supernatural bliss. Exactly because of this absolute necessity of baptism, the loving Saviour so ordained, that, in a case of necessity, which, with newborn babes, may often happen, and actually does happen, every rational human being can baptize. Despite this kind ordinance, it may happen, that a child dies without baptism, even before, or just after it has been born. If this happens without any fault of the parents whatever, it is, certainly, a sore affliction for them. They must, however, take it with perfect resig-

nation to the will of Him, who is the Sovereign Lord of life and death and the absolutely Free Dispenser of all graces. Hence they may, in some measure, console themselves with the widely spread, nay, we may say with the universal and well-grounded doctrine of theologians, that such children are not consigned to eternal torture, as they have no personal sins, but only the guilt of original sin to atone for, and that they shall even enjoy a natural happiness proportionate to their natural capabilities.

Quite different is the case with parents who are to blame that a child dies without baptism. If the fault, that caused the death of the child either before or at its birth, was intentional, then parents are infant-murderers, doubly so, because they deprive the child of the natural and the supernatural life of grace and eternal happiness. A horrible crime, — not unusually counseled and occasioned by satan and his aiders and abettors through a miserable regard of health or circumstances of property!

Indirectly, also, parents can be the cause of their children's dying without baptism, for example, by calling in, at a time when help is necessary, unscrupulous physicians, or other persons, who know nothing, or do not wish to know anything of religion and baptism.

Would they be willing to risk life and health of the mother and child by entrusting them to persons of whose inexperience and malevolent disposition they are convinced? And, therefore, ought they not be still more anxious to choose in a case of

necessity only such persons as have at heart, more than anything else, the supernatural life, which is imparted already in such an emergency to the infant soul, provided baptism be validly administered, — and who, aside of the good will, also have the necessary knowledge?

Moreover, it is gross and exceedingly dangerous negligence on the part of parents to put off the baptism of the child too long. The life of the child is but a very delicate thread, so to speak. How easily can this be torn asunder, even if the child should appear strong and healthy! Are there, for instance, mothers wanting who throughout their life weep and lament, because they found their child one morning smothered by a cushion or their own arm?! And then the loss is eternal and one which can never be retrieved. Conscientious parents, therefore, never defer the baptism of their child beyond the first Sunday after its birth. At the same time, they observe the hour set apart and appointed by the priest. When children of several weeks, nay months, are brought for baptism, it casts a bad light upon the religious sense of parents, let them be rich and noble, or poor and lowly. And here no excuses of greater convenience, of invitations extended to sponsors who live afar, of better preparation for a baptismal banquet, are valid. For here, there is question of securing to the child, as soon as possible, the most necessary grace.

For the time of baptism, parents must provide *good sponsors*. One, either of the same, or of a different sex from the infant to be baptized, is

sufficient. More than two, and of these one representing each sex, there ought not to be. The principal thing is that the godfather and godmother be *good Catholics*. For they take upon themselves the duty, where necessary, for instance in case of the death of parents, to provide for the Catholic education of the godchild, and shall have to give an account at their death as to the fulfilment or neglect of this duty. From this follows directly that you shall not select *sponsors who are not Catholics;* likewise, in no case are Catholics allowed to act as sponsors at a baptism administered by a preacher of any sect to a child of non-Catholic parents. *Nor are, moreover, those permitted as sponsors, who are Catholics only in name, who have not fulfilled their Easter duty or who otherwise lead a publicly sinful life.* If such Catholics in name only would or should be sponsors at the baptism of a child belonging to Catholic parents, they must previously give proof of being converted. Strictly speaking, the priest who baptizes, has the full right, nay the duty, to inform himself before administering baptism, as to the qualifications of the sponsors, unless he know them otherwise. But, really, it is a source of offense and highly disagreeable to the priest, and, perhaps, still more so to the people, if he should, immediately at the church door, be obliged to ask them to their face: "Are you a Catholic and, to be sure, a good Catholic?" Parents can and should preclude this necessity of asking, by fulfilling their duty of choosing only good sponsors. It is commendable, and truly Christian-like, if relations, friends and

neighbors readily and cheerfully accept an invitation extended to themselves of being sponsors. For it is a genuine act of charity which they show the parents and the child, especially if these are poor, indigent and strangers.

The custom that the father of the child should go along with the sponsor, if at all possible, is much better, in my judgment, than if the sponsors go alone. For, apart from the fact, that the recording of the different names and dates in the baptismal register can be done with less difficulty and greater dispatch if the father be present, it almost has the appearance of a certain indifference, if he fails to escort his babe on this first and most important visit to the house of God. Furthermore, it would not hurt fathers, if with their own ears they were to hear once more the holy baptismal vows of their children, and, at the same time, if they were to take a firm resolution to assist their child, by word and action, in the fulfilment thereof.

*If the marriage be a mixed one, the Catholic party is not allowed under any condition, to permit the child to be baptized by the preacher of the non-Catholic party.* For, in the first place, considering the present division of sects into all kinds of unbelief, it is exceedingly doubtful, as to whether baptism thus conferred, administered for instance without natural water or without the right words, be valid, and, therefore, as to whether the child becomes a Christian, or, — remains a heathen. Even should this not be called in question, nevertheless, the administration of baptism by a preacher, or any

one else, (for a preacher in this case, has no more power than any other human individual whatsoever) *except in a case of emergency*, is not allowed, and indeed, even under pain of a mortal sin. This is an additional feature, which should fill Catholics with real fear and horror of mixed marriages. Alas for the stupid credulity to be found among girls who are ever ready to marry! The non-Catholic party, it is true, promises on the strength of his word as a man, and, in some regions, over the personal signature of his name, that the children, if there should be any, shall be baptized and educated according to the Catholic religion. Only after this document is sent on to the bishop, the dispensation by the church is granted for a mere contracting of matrimony. The first child arrives, and the Lutheran and Methodist relatives and the preacher of the husband cling to him like so many burs. All his oral and written promises are forgotten. The poor woman and mother may weep and lament as much as she pleases; his answer is: "Either not at all, or the child shall be baptized by my preacher!" The poor mother, or wife, is deceived; deceived because she so willed it, because she did not listen to the warning of the priest; deceived and deprived of peace and happiness for all her life, perhaps also for eternity! Wherefore, youths and maidens, be on your guard as long as there is yet time! The salvation of immortal souls is at stake!

Finally, parents should sanctify the day on which their children were baptized. There is nothing to prevent them from celebrating on this

day a little family festival. The birth of a child is, to be sure, also a natural honor and a natural blessing for parents. "To be blest with children, is to be blest by God," is a truism. The chief object, however, of rejoicing should be the supernatural benediction imparted to the child and its parents. These ought to think and say: Here we have now a child of heaven, a living temple of the Triune God! Near its side God at the baptismal font has placed the angel guardian and the patron saint. And now He places us beside it as its visible guardian angels. Our duty is to lead this infant back into the arms of Him, who to-day by the merits of its first-born Brother, made it a child of His.—Such thoughts do not disturb the worldly joy, but temper, ennoble, sanctify it. And these sentiments ought to come to the mind of parents and children and be refreshed, as often as the day of baptism returns, or, (as this has almost passed out of vogue), the day of one's patron saint, because this reminds one immediately of the day of baptism. It does not seem commendable to me, that parents should celebrate the birthday, but never the name's day of children. The celebration of the name's day, precisely, offers to parents the best opportunity to remind the children of the wonders of grace, which holy baptism operated in their soul, and to put them in mind of the princes of heaven, their patrons, by whose name they cannot be called, without growing conscious of the obligation to follow their example. If parents are desirous to follow the style of the world and to celebrate the birthday of children, they must take

care that the worldly celebration does not only not exclude the sentiment of gratitude for the natural blessing of birth, of earthly existence, but also promote it.

At all events, it is a grave mistake, if the birthday of the six to eight year, or also, the fourteen to fifteen year old boy or girl (and the girls usually are given the preference; the boys are not so readily thought of), is commemorated with a so-called surprise party, at which, of course, there must be no want of doubtful dances, and games of forfeits and other plays, prolonged until a very late hour of the night, and all this without the requisite surveillance! This is tantamount to throwing open every portal and passage to a premature, yea, entirely too early, and, therefore, very dangerous worldlymindedness on the part of children. If parents, only too soon, get to taste the bitter fruits thereof, they can but blame themselves.

Christian parents! At the end of baptism the priest laid a white robe, the symbol of sanctifying grace, on the shoulder of your child and, at the same time, uttered these solemn words: "Receive the white garment and bear it unstained before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you may possess eternal life." Then your child did not yet understand these words. You understand their meaning and you must realize and carry them out in regard to your children. Through baptism you place your child upon the only right way that leads to heaven. Conduct it entirely up and in, so that you also with the child may receive eternal life. Amen.

## 10. Training in Piety from Earliest Childhood.

Tobias filium suum ab infantia timere
Deum docuit. Tob. 1, 10.

"Tobias taught his son from his infancy to fear God."

From heaven back again to heaven! This is the great task of parents in regard to their children, as it is also the one design and concern of the Heavenly Father. For this reason above all, parents must bring the child on the true road to heaven. This they do by striving to procure for it as soon as possible after it has been born into this world, the grace of regeneration through baptism. By this means, their infant becomes a child of God and of the church, who received from Christ the right, the duty and the means to lead the child back into heaven. For, the church is the only true institution of salvation for mankind, therefore the nearest representative of God and Christ in regard to the child. But now, as a rule, the church cannot during the first years of the child, exert her care directly over it, so that the life of grace, implanted into the infant through baptism, shall not only not remain without nourishment, but, also, as soon as possible, be awakened and strengthened. Her representatives, the parents, must provide for this. Let us then, see:

1. the obligation of parents to teach their children from earliest infancy a habit of religion and piety;
2. the manner and means of fulfilling this duty.

1. It happens not unfrequently that some people express the opinion that, as concerns the religious education of the child, one may or even must wait until it has the full use of reason; that prior to this it does not understand anything of prayer and pious exercises and performs them only mechanically, and that later on, it will retain such mechanical way of performing the same. Those who would be still smarter, even contend that the outward training or rehearsing in religious exercises of piety exerts too great an influence on the choice of a religion which is to be made with full knowledge and freedom. Repeatedly did I have to hear from the mouth of fallen off Catholics who had the name of being men of learning, such truly harrowing expressions as, "No priest, no church-going, no catechism, no parochial school, no prayer shall influence my children before their fourteenth year. Later, should they absolutely insist upon it, they may choose any religion they please." This view is false, and, if it should be carried out, in most cases, will be the ruination of the child. Certainly the spiritual faculties lie dormant in the infant, but they do not awake all of a sudden, as it were, during the night, but by degrees. And this awakening is promoted by the assistance of parents. Gradual understanding presupposes many impressions on eyes and ears and is awakened especially by the word of parents, who, as the first teachers, answer

the thousand and one questions of curiosity which the child puts. Still more:

Sanctifying grace, the three theological and also the principal moral virtues, like so many seed-kernels are implanted at baptism into the garden of the infant heart. Now, shall these lie there abandoned six to seven years without food, without air and light and nursing? The disadvantage arising therefrom could, in most cases, never again be made up for. The *authority* of the greatest adepts in paedagogics such as Overberg, Bishop Ketteler, Alban Stolz, Coadjutor Bp. Kramer, confirm this statement by asserting quite openly: As the child is in its sixth and seventh years, so it will remain. If the hand of the parents, and especially that of a pious mother, has hitherto cherished and fostered and, as it were, lured out of the ground of the infant heart the tender sprouts of faith, love and piety, then the school and the church, upon receiving the child, already find there tiny plants, which they need only to nurse further. But, if up to this the child has remained completely without religious influence, or if this influence was not hearty and loving, penetrating from the heart of the child, those heavenly seed-kernels lose a great deal of their developing vigor, and, in addition to this, the ground of the garden has become too hard and dry. Another illustration. The soul of the child after baptism is, as it were, like the bud of a sunflower. What is necessary that this bud be developed to the full splendor of blossom? Nothing except that parents, especially the mother, direct this bud again and again to the light and the warmth

of religion. If she does not understand this, or, if she fails to do this, then the tender bud, the soul, the heart of the child will waste away and die. This is the judgment of the ablest educators, and is not grasped, as it were, out of the air, but taken from actual *experience.*

In the life of very many saints we read expressly, that they, and indeed, almost always under the direction of a truly pious mother, displayed, already in tenderest childhood that taste for prayer, for a love of Jesus, Mary and the poor, for holy modesty and angelic purity, which in later life developed into heroic virtues. Susanna and Tobias in the Old Testament, in the Christian era St. Louis of France, several very youthful martyrs, Aloysius, Stanislaus and Berchmans, are but a few examples taken from the great number of those who now for all eternity shall shine before the Everlasting Sun in heaven, perhaps only for this reason, that their pious mother understood how to turn ever and anon, the delicate bud of infancy toward the sun of grace, of love and religion. The examples of the *kingdom of darkness* are less known to us here upon earth. But could we hold a review among the damned and ask them one after another, "What brought you and you and you from infancy on the way to hell?" — I feel certain, many a one should answer: "See here to the right or to the left ahead of me, aye, still deep below me my father, my mother. They had a heart without religion, without piety, cold as ice, hard as stone. Having been so near them, also my heart was chilled when I was a child. The church and school

could not succeed any more to thoroughly warm it up. This was the beginning of my way to hell." — And, in reality,

*every-day life corroborates the experience of the saints, and probably, also, that of the damned.* One need not have taught catechism for many years in a parochial school, especially in the lowest classes, to grasp with hands, as it were, this truth. Here you meet boys and girls from six to seven years, who, up to the present, only vegetated — growing up like little brutes. Of the Father in heaven, of Jesus, Mary, of the Guardian Angel, they know nothing. They do not know at all how to make the sign of the cross, or, perhaps make it in a manner as the coarsest clown would do. The *Our Father* and *Hail Mary* are to them as strange as hamlets in Spain. Of punishment and reward after death they have never heard anything. All germs of religion and virtue lie as yet deeply buried in their little hearts, and, doubtless, what is often worst, buried under quite a high rubbish-pile of bad habits, of laziness, sensuality, immodesty, lying, hypocrisy and stubbornness. In such a condition the mother brings the child to school! Alas for the poor teachers and priests! They may yet succeed in imparting to the child A B C, multiplication table and the ability to write upon a slate, even though it received from the Creator only medium talents. But, also religion and piety? These do not come solely from without; they must originate from within. It is impossible, however, that the soul of these children should produce anything good, because it contains nothing, or rather,

because all that the Holy Ghost instilled into it by baptism, has dwindled, faded away and perished for want of tender care on the part of a pious mother. Teachers and priests plague themselves and must take pains also with such neglected children. Yet, often it requires months before they see a spark flash out from the hard stone. Very often all their labors effect nothing more than that the children learn the most essential things of religion with their memory only, and by exterior practice. But what they have learned merely outwardly without interior firmness, they cast off as an irksome burden during the first or second year after Holy Communion, and thus help to swell by so many ciphers the countless number of fallen away Catholics.

*Children remain what they have become up to the sixth and seventh year through the care of parents.* This naturally also holds good in a favorable sense. It is a real joy of the heart which teachers and priests experience when they receive into school the children of truly pious parents. At the warm hearth-flame of the family, especially at the warm mother heart, the bud has already opened. The child this long while already knows, loves and cherishes what it hears in school about God and heaven, prayer and piety, innocence and obedience. It just seems as though a quite different soul looked out from the eyes of such a child. In its heart there are to be found no hard crusts and stones, no overrunning poisonous shoots. The best of gardeners, the pious mother, did not permit such deleterious sprouts to rise, but thoroughly furrowed

the ground and implanted many a grain of heavenly seed. Thereto church and school now bring more light and heavenly dew, and, in addition, sow kernel after kernel. The child of pious parents will almost always, barring of course cases of ruin by frost and ravenous wolves, grow up to be a genuine pious Christian. *As the child is in its sixth and seventh years through the care of parents, so it will remain.*

In a monthly publication I lately read these words, which are as beautiful as they are true: "The child that learns the Our Father on the lap of its mother; that hears from the lips of its mother the heroic stories of the patriarchs and the lovable narrations about the little Christ-child, possesses a living source of religious faith in its soul, which cannot be wholly effaced, neither by the scorching sun, nor by the storms of life . . . . . The profound and sweet impressions instilled by a mother, remain still fresh and green when every other recollection withers and dries up: yea, the death agony itself cannot destroy them."

Do not forget this, Christian parents, and therefrom conclude the all important duty you have of initiating your children into religion and piety, already during the very first years. People often speak of healthy and unhealthy habitations. These latter are damp, foul and moldy. Their inmates, especially the children, from infancy up, are impregnated with all kinds of disease germs, linger about in wretched bodies until an early death carries them off. The former dwellings are bright, dry and airy. Fresh and healthy do the children

grow up, and full of life and cheer look forward into the world. It may not always lie within your power to make your terrestrial habitation such as will be perfectly healthy for bodily life. But you can and must, whatever your abode be, make it healthy for religious-moral life. Now, it is healthy if you yourselves possess and practice religion and piety. The atmosphere in your dwelling is then exactly what your children need for a vigorous healthy life unto heaven. If you fail to do this, if one feels and breathes in your habitation the stifling, musty, clammy cold atmosphere of the world, charged with all kinds of poisonous ingredients, you can see for yourselves, if you will not be blind, that your children when they are six or seven years old, bear about in themselves the germs of spiritual, religious consumption, nay, even of moral depravity.

Nowadays we often hear and read of complaints being made on account of the alarming increase of crime, committed in early childhood and youth, crimes of every description down to dastardly suicide. Exterior means to prevent crime, or to punish the commission thereof in a manner calculated to inspire fear, are not wanting to the modern police department. Our celebrated civilization, in its height and depth and width, has made wonderful strides forward. But whence that frightful increase in the number of juvenile criminals, as the plain statistics of our houses of correction go to show? Philanthropists, individually and collectively, commissioned by high authority, have endeavored to answer this question. Generally speaking, they

find the ultimate reason *in a lack of education during early childhood*. Most of them, however, because they do not stand on the ground of the true religion and the true Church will not dare to make any suggestion as to the character which education during childhood ought to partake of. In this alone do they agree, that one ought to begin *very early* to impart an education calculated to prevent crime. Such was the sentiment of General Brinkerhof, who, as the presiding officer in a session of the Prison Reform Congress, held in July of 1874, said this: "I am convinced, the number of criminals would be considerably reduced, if more pains were taken with the education of children *whilst they are small*. Education in school is begun *at too late a period*. More care should be bestowed on the cultivation of the Kindergarten; for, a more lasting impression can be made on the character of every man *before he has reached the sixth year of his life, than in all subsequent years taken together*."

The conclusion, then, is to cultivate the Kindergarten. — Very true, provided that the Kindergarten be pervaded with the light and warmth of the one true religion, which the Divine Lover of children has instituted, and provided that the ladies, who are in charge of the Kindergarten, draw, as pure souls, from the Sacred Heart of Jesus such love and devotion, as will render them fit to bestow the right kind of fostering care on the little ones exteriorly and interiorly. But it is impossible to have a Kindergarten everywhere. Besides, the aim of such an institution, especially in larger cities, is only to supply, in a measure, what individual

families fail to do, either through inability, or, through culpable neglect. *The parental home, however, is, or at least, ought to be, the best Kindergarten, and a pious mother in this garden ought to be the best gardener.* If the child on his mother's arm has learned and deeply impressed on his heart the couplet — *Wherever I am and whatever I do, God, my Father, looks me through* — that is to say, if the mother has infused, as it were, into the heart of the little one a fear of God, telling him that his good actions shall surely be rewarded, and his evil deeds surely punished, then such a child will permit himself to be drawn unto the path of crime only in rare cases.

The *necessity* of providing at home for a pious, religious education of the children already in tenderest age, I think, you all realize. Here no excuse holds good such as, "For this we have no capability, no time!" If you now have no capability for it, then this is a truly sad proof that you have neglected in your youth to acquire religion and piety as the most necessary dowry for marriage. In this case you must now pray and work all the more, that for the children's sake you may still acquire the same. If you have no time for it, then you have also no time to go to heaven. For you will go to heaven, only if you can bring your children with you. For this, however, the necessary beginning, from which almost always depend the good continuation and prosperous termination, is a truly pious, religious education and training during the first years of childhood.

2. Now if you ask me, "*How, in detail, shall*

*we provide for the fulfilment of this duty?*" — my answer is brief — "love is inventive." If you have in your heart a true, supernatural love for the children, this will best teach you all the means and ways and the knack to awaken in their tender hearts all those sentiments which are, as it were, the roots from which a genuine Christian life can bud forth. Ere long we shall consider also other qualifications which you must possess to do this successfully. To-day we would, for a few moments, review a household, which, as I have just described, is a healthy one for the development of the religious life of the children.

What do we behold there immediately on entering and on passing through the dwelling and bed rooms? *A crucifix with two candles* and some flowers, small pictures and statues arranged to form a little altar; on the walls a picture of the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, of St. Joseph and the dear Guardian Angel, also of various patron saints. In addition perhaps, if father can afford it, one or other secular picture, but by no means only secular ones, so that upon stepping into the first room, one might almost fancy himself to have strayed into the house of a family without religion, — and, least of all, those glaring, loud, for the most part, impudently and immodestly dressed caricatures of girls, which the soap dealer or the agent for some dangerous newspaper or fireside publication, threw into the bargain. Away with these caricatures, consign them to the flames. The devil of the flesh leers out of them into the eyes and the very soul of the child!

We see, at least in the principal room and at the upper end of the bedsteads, *holy water vessels*, and, to be sure, not dried up, but filled. We notice how mother never takes the babe into her arms or puts him away, especially mornings and evenings, without impressing on his head the sign of the cross; how she directs his hand and pronounces the words, until in the second or third year he can do so himself.

The pious mother also has *books* handy for the religious instruction of her children. The first and best are precisely the crucifix and pictures. When the mother is seated at her work and the little ones are about her, she directs their attention to these images. From the cross there looks the dear Saviour, from the pictures the saints peer, so to speak, into the soul of the little ones. Thus, too, the mother, to satisfy the curiosity of her children, finds the best opportunity of telling them at first a little, then more and more of Jesus, Mary, the Angel Guardian, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Calvary, of heaven and hell, sin and virtue. In this way children learn without any effort whatever from the lips of their mother, the most important truths of catechism and bible history.

This object lesson through pictures serves the mother also as the most effectual *means of punishment*. The child, for instance, has been stubborn, dainty-mouthed, quarrelsome, immodest. Mother sees and hears all. On the spot she leads the child before the crucifix, the picture of the Heart of Jesus, or the Blessed Virgin. "Child, what have you done? Jesus, Mary, the Guardian Angel have

seen it and are saddened by your fault. Come, we both will ask their pardon for you, and then you promise them that you surely will not do it again." Thus the child has elicited contrition and a purpose of amendment, without knowing the names of these acts. Then if the mother adds quietly and earnestly: "Should you fall back into the same fault I must punish you, so that Jesus may not do so Himself," she will hardly ever have to resort to stick or switch, or she will, after once having inflicted a light punishment, be very rarely necessitated to punish contumacious relapses into faults which she had forbidden.

Thus, day in and day out, the pious mother in a healthful house, sows the seed-kernels of religion and piety into the hearts of her children and plucks up the first sprouts of noxious weeds. To do this causes her no trouble, robs her of no time, constitutes her sweetest joy and recreation.

One day a priest, as he was passing through a field, found a four year old boy sitting in the grass by the wayside. Angelic innocence beamed from his eyes. "Tell me, my little fellow," the priest asked him, "can you already make the sign of the Cross?" As if surprised at how little the question presupposed, the boy looked at him and smiled roguishly. Nearby, busy with work, was the mother, who said to the priest, "That is not enough for my little one; ask him some questions from catechism. He will answer them." — The priest, as if giving a little catechetical instruction, examined him in regard to the most important doctrines and truths of our holy religion. The little

fellow did not miss a question; everyone of his answers was brief, lucid and clear. Surprised at this the priest asked the mother, who stood near and listened: "How did you manage to teach this little four year old boy all that he already knows?" With visible joy and gladness she answered, "*I only did what I could.* When the little one is on my lap, whenever I dress him, give him to eat, and whenever I am at leisure otherwise, I usually tell him of the good God and the teachings and practices of our holy religion. I repeat it several times, let him tell it after me over and over, and thus it is that he gradually learns so much. I have done so daily and *God has blessed my efforts.*" — Oh, that all mothers acted like this one. Oh, that they all *would do what they could*, in order to instruct their children at the *earliest possible age*, and, in doing so, take especially those words to heart — "*God has blessed my efforts.*" The truly pious mother is convinced that the tender germs which, by her instruction, that is to say, by her motherly conversation with her children, she implanted into their hearts, cannot grow without the dew of divine grace; therefore she often prays ardently to the Heart of Jesus and Mary: "Make a pious mother of me; teach me the most difficult of all arts, the education of children!" And for this reason she succeeds in making of her little ones, by word and example, children who are fond of prayer. She does not thunder at them: "Will you pray!" — she prays with the children, shows them how. With the third, fourth, or fifth year the little ones do not know merely a few ejaculatory prayers, but also the

*Our Father* and *Hail Mary.* And they do not rattle this off amid laughing and gaping about, but with hands folded and eyes and posture so modest, that one fancies to behold an angel praying For so, the children have learned of their mother whenever she prayed.

Are you not pleased with this *healthful* home? To render the picture complete there is only one wanting yet, — a *good Father.* He cannot it is true, influence the little ones so directly, so continuously and effectually as the mother. But he can give great aid, if in the evening he goes, with a true father's love, among his children, if he amuses himself with them after supper, has them relate what they have heard from mother; if he prays with them, praises and rewards them in case they have done well, or also, if necessary, speaks an earnest word. Into an *unwholesome* home I will not lead you to-day. We should find in it just the reverse. We there feel a strange foreboding, and with fear and trembling we think and say: "Alas, what shall become of the poor children, into whose heart from infancy up, no religion or piety is instilled!"—Look around and reflect, whether your home is a wholesome or unhealthful one. You are not so cruel as to undermine intentionally the health of your children. Have care, then still more of the health of their soul. But this you do only then, if from tenderest infancy, you inculcate into their heart sentiments of religion and piety. For the rule is, *as your children are in their sixth and seventh years, so they will remain.* Amen.

## Parental Piety. Daily Prayers and Sunday Observance.

Ego et Domus mea serviemus Domino. Josue 24, 15.

"I and my house, we will serve the Lord."

As children are in their sixth, seventh and eighth years, so they will remain. This is an assertion made by the best educators, and a truth which is founded on observation and experience of every-day life. During these tender years, however, children are what domestic education and the family make them. With reason, therefore, have we asserted it to be the most sacred duty of parents to initiate their children from their first years into religion and piety. They must make their house a *healthy* home, *i. e.*, a home in which the child finds that spiritual atmosphere and nourishment, which awaken and foster the germs of religion and virtue, that have been implanted into its heart through baptism. To this end the interior arrangement of the house, which impresses the senses of the child, contributes not a little. Crucifix, holy water, religious pictures, have on the soul of a child, through its exterior senses, a much deeper effect than many parents might think. Moreover, these exterior objects under the direction

of a pious mother, are, as it were, so many picture books, out of which the curious little ones learn the most important truths and facts of religion, long before they get to go to school.

With what success the pious mother may make use of religious pictures in the work of education, as also, when administering necessary punishment to the little ones, the following instance will show. The small son of a lady who belonged to the nobility, had again become guilty of stubbornness and obstinacy. The mother, rod in hand, goes towards him. "Oh, do not whip me," the little fellow cries — "I shall never again be stubborn." The mother leads her boy before a picture of the last judgment, which was suspended on the wall in the parlor. She points out to him the Judge of the world, having on his right the number of those who are called to eternal bliss, and on his left the wicked, among them a mother with her children. Thereupon she said to her little one, who, by contemplating the picture, had already been deeply moved — "Do you see this mother with her children in the midst of the damned? I too shall one day be called to account, as to whether I have brought you up in a Christian manner, and punished you as you deserved for the faults you committed. He will one day demand you back from me. Should I not correct you whenever you deserve it, I shall be punished by the Just God. Would you that your mother be damned one day on your account?" — "No, mother, no," cried the boy amid much shedding of tears. "You shall not be punished by God! Here, take the rod; I have

deserved it; whip me right thoroughly, so that you will not be punished."

Did not this mother have a knack of impressing through eye and vivid representation, the heart of her child? Would, that all mothers recognized the value and help of religious pictures in the parental home! And still more, would that they were possessed at least of such a Christian spirit, as to know how to make capital of the influence of these and other exterior means on the heart of their children.

But these outward aids are not sufficient. Parents must, before the eyes of the children and with them, lead a truly pious life. Father and mother must say and do the following: "*We and our house will serve the Lord.*" *They must possess true and genuine piety.* Let us consider briefly: —

1. the nature,
2. the development and exercise of the same in the family.

1. The mere word piety, perhaps, gives some of you the chills. "Are we then to pray the rosary every day, hear Mass every day, receive the sacraments every seven or fourteen days, spend the entire Sunday in church?" Well, father or mother, whoever you may be, supposing you could do all this without missing other duties of your state, and that you really did it to please God and to implore His grace upon yourself, should you thereby do any evil? Would you on your death-bed, or in judgment, regret to have done so? Just ponder over it quietly. The hour shall come with absolute certainty, when you will judge quite

differently as to the exterior practices of Christian piety, from what you, perchance, do at present.

But let us make ideas clear. In what must the piety of parents consist, if their house is to be wholesome and the education of children to be assured from the very beginning? Here, to be sure, there is a "more" or "less" in proportion as the conditions of persons and places may be different. If we would cling to what, on an average, is essential and necessary for all, we need but hold to the declaration of St. Thomas, namely, that *piety is a part of justice.* At the head of the Ten Commandments we find, fraught with deep meaning, these words: "*I am the Lord thy God.*" In reference to this highest Lord, every man, every union of men, and, therefore, also the most primitive society, founded by God Himself, the family, has essential duties. Without exception, all owe Him adoration and thanksgiving, atonement for faults committed, incessant prayer for new graces and benefits. If we hold fast to this and, furthermore, reflect, that these various duties, which we comprehend under the name of religious piety, must be rendered to God, not merely interiorly, but also outwardly through participation of the body, not only in private by each individual singly, but also in common by every society as such, we may briefly say:

2. On the supposition that a family wishes to conduct a truly Christian-religious house, in which the education of children is assured from the very outset, we must find in it

a) on an average a true and faithful per-

formance of the most necessary daily prayers, and

b) a conscientious sanctification of the Sunday.

a) I will not say a word as to the necessity of frequent daily prayer in general. One thing is certain, that the daily prayers are a necessary means of grace, and that, therefore, they cannot be omitted. I do not say now and then through overhaste, but for days and weeks, and thus regularly, without the religious moral life suffering a great loss. Not less certain is it, that the performance of these prayers, as far as it is in any way possible, ought to be a *common* one in every family. Excuses there are, of course, without number. In the morning they do not all rise at the same time; in the evening the father and the grown up sons, for the most part, are out of the house, and the daughter is sitting with her company in the front room. The mother, who, but too often, must play the part of a hired girl, has still so much to do and arrange in kitchen and house, that she thinks she has no time to pray with the little ones and, therefore, believes that she satisfies her obligation, if she calls to them to pray before they go to bed. The adult children often imagine that they would surrender their dignity, were they to kneel down with their little brothers and sisters for prayer. Praying before meals is old-fashioned. Some Catholics adopt from infidels what these have learnt of quadrupeds. "Well," says another in excuse, "that's the way people do." But is a *family* in which this is done a *truly Christian* one? Does one find and breathe in it the pure healthy

air of religion in which the little ones can develop a pious Christian life? Never! It were a great worldwonder should the offspring of such a family become truly pious children! When they are grown up somewhat, they already manifest, indeed, the fruits of a coldness and indifference so conspicuous, that with certitude one can foretell, they will fall off eventually from their religion.

Christian parents! Make your home a wholesome one! Such, however, it will become only by a healthy piety, — a piety which needs must find expression and, at the same time, necessary nourishment in the most regular possible performance of daily prayers, mornings, evenings and at table. With the more grown up children, perhaps, you will not be able to do much any more. That is your fault. You have not preserved their hearts warm and impressible when they were yet small. Now, likely, there is no other help possible than that you pray to God to soften again with the hammer of His all-powerful grace the hearts, which have become hard as bone and stone. But if you have as yet small children, or at least such as have pliable hearts, oh, then by working together in harmony, do all you can to promote family prayer by reciting it every day in common. And you can do much, if from a clear conviction of your duty you derive a firm, steadfast resolution to fulfil the same.

As to its *carrying out*, hold fast to the golden maxim: "*Not too much, and not too little, virtue always lies in the middle.*"

"Not too much." Parents who recite with

their children too many and too long prayers, injure piety. The children grow weary and rattle them off mechanically. Wherefore, let your prayers be short and sweet! For instance, in the morning and evening the short little prayer from the small book for children, the good intention of the Apostleship of prayer; before and after meals, "*Bless us o Lord* etc.," and "*Let us return thanks to Thee, O Lord*" with an "*Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be to the Father.*" You may add in the morning, at noon and in the evening, the "*Angelus*," as otherwise it might be forgotten. At particular times, for instance during Advent and Lent, in May and October, as also when you have some special petition to make, you may recite in common very appropriately the Rosary or, at least, the Litany of Loretto. A quarter of an hour is surely not too much!

"*But also not too little.*" The sign of the cross alone, and then nothing more, at most only the cold admonition, — 'Always pray, but I have no time' — is, certainly, too little. The chief stress must be laid on the daily performance of prayer *in common*. Woe to the children of a house where this is not done! On the other hand, benediction and blessing upon the home, where both the pious parents co-operate to uphold the custom of daily prayers! As they bring up their children to be bodily strong and healthy, by providing them every day with wholesome and sufficient food, so they nourish and strengthen in them also the life of grace, the life unto heaven by imploring daily upon themselves and their children the dew of

grace through the prayer, which they perform in common. In their house, and if it were the poorest hut, Jesus fulfils His promise: "*Where there are two or more gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.*" (Matth. 18. 20.) But, if in the household, as a rule, they do not pray, and do not pray in common, Jesus is not there. And if Jesus is not there, some one else is there. I will not mention his name. He is too terrible, and too awful are the effects of his presence, namely an irreligious, impious, anti-Christian growing up of the poor children.

On the other hand, parents may hope with confidence, that an early training of children to perform their daily prayers, will prove to them for their whole future life a powerful protection against temptations, and, in case they should go astray from the right path, a sure means of reclaiming them. Many a priest, too, could narrate some remarkable instances, showing how sons and daughters, who had been taught by a pious mother to say every night before going to bed at least one Hail Mary, were preserved from going under in great temptations; moreover, that others who, succumbing to the violence of passions and their temptations, had gone entirely astray through evil companionship, were saved, if they happened to retain the habit, acquired in childhood, to recite at least some prayer or other every day. I myself was acquainted with a poor widow, who prayed daily with her children. Two of her sons, on account of poverty at home, went abroad in quest of work and wages. Years after, they returned to

their mother as fallen off Catholics and members of a secret society. Having listened to the complaints of the mother who was nearly heart-broken, I encouraged her to pray with confidence to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and then, amongst other questions, inquired of her: "Did you pray regularly with your sons when they were small, and did you not observe whether they still now pray a little?" With a face radiant with hopefulness, she answered: "As long as they were with me at home, we prayed regularly in common every day; now, after their return they never retire to rest at night without kneeling down at their bedside and praying for a short while." I remarked to the mother: "Your sons are saved." And, in fact, both were reconciled to the church after a brief space of time and lived the life of true Catholic men thereafter.

The daily prayers, which are best if recited in common, draw down the dew of heaven upon the family, upon the children. The dew drops, however, evaporate too rapidly, and before they have penetrated deep enough into the soil and communicated to it their fertilizing vigor. The soil of the human heart, just like the soil of field and garden, must have its *shower*. This shower of heavenly grace is brought upon the Christian family, upon the children, by *a full and conscientious sanctification of the Sunday.*

Let me add but a few words more on this subject, which is so important. Parents, mark well, that, beginning with the use of reason, therefore, certainly from the time when you send the children to

the parochial school, *they are obliged under mortal sin, ordinarily speaking, to hear Mass on Sundays;* and to hear the Christian instruction on Sunday afternoons, and to be present at the daily school Mass they are bound by the order of school. Now, are there no parents at all who directly or indirectly keep their children, when these are seven, eight or nine years old, from fulfilling the above obligations? On Monday morning the teachers, and after them the priest when he comes to school to teach catechism, have to go through the list of names. What answers and excuses do they get to hear from those who were absent! "I had no shoes, — I overslept Sunday morning, — my mother did not yet have the breakfast ready, — my father said I didn't need to go and took me along on a visit to my uncle, — mother said I had to help her to get the dinner ready earlier than usual, in order to be able to go on an excursion in the afternoon." Suchlike nay still much worse excuses come from the mouth of children. They all are grievous accusations against parents. Just continue in this manner you blind parents! In the first and second year after first Communion, you will have to witness blue wonders in your children. Reflect well on it: at the time of the particular judgment you will find on your account the sins of Sunday desecration, committed by your children. For want of full knowledge and consent, the children may not always have sinned grievously, but you cannot plead such an excuse. Judgment and guilt will strike you with full force. Wherefore, be on your guard. The devout hearing of

Mass on Sunday is, as to the Christian-religious life of all Christians, of absolute, decisive importance.

Catholics, who, when they have grown old can say, — "never in our life did we, through our own fault, miss Mass on Sundays, or Holy Days of obligation; never did we come too late or leave church too soon." — such Catholics, especially nowadays, are to the heart of the priest, the pastor, a genuine consolation. And he will then soon find out that such faithful fulfilment of one's obligation in this regard, is a sacred tradition in the family ever since the days of parents or grand parents For, *what we accustom ourselves to do in youth, we still continue to practice when we have grown old.* Therefore, train your children from early youth, so that they will attend Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of obligation regularly, entirely and devoutly. This also applies to the full sanctification of Sunday *by being attentive to the sermon and participating in the divine service at church, aside of Holy Mass.* What is the state of affairs in this respect? There are, alas, fathers and mothers, desirous to pass as Catholics, who celebrate the Sunday about in this fashion. As early as possible they dismiss God and their conscience with a low Mass; sermon, they hear none from one year's end to the other; to obtain for themselves in the afternoon the blessing of the Most Holy Sacrament, never occurs to their mind. The entire balance of the Sunday, of the Lord's day, belongs to the world. Hence they sleep and visit, read newspapers and worse stuff, and play cards amid wine and beer glasses.

Besides, the local newspapers on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings bring long columns filled with advertisements of park, garden, theatre and excursions on water and on land, so that a choice becomes difficult, as to where one can and will amuse himself best on Sunday afternoon. In large crowds they run to these places. The divine Saviour in the Tabernacle may see how He can console Himself alone in His abandonment! He may then also intercede and offer Himself for the sins which His brethren commit exactly on Sunday afternoon, by their disorderly voluptuousness, against Himself and the Heavenly Father. Only He cannot pray now as He once did on the Cross, — "*Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*"

I speak to-day, above all, of and to parents. And here I ask, if parents act in such a way — and many do, as a matter of fact, act thus, and, indeed, young fathers and mothers, and just such very often who are somewhat better situated, or, at least, consider themselves so, and, to be sure, not once or twice, which might yet be excused, but on an average Sunday after Sunday, year after year — are such truly devout parents? No, and repeatedly no! Their piety is just as consumptive and as miserable as their tepid and cold presence at low Mass. And can such parents bring up truly pious children? No and again no! Nobody can give what he does not have. Such parents may drill and polish their children exteriorly, so that they may become neat little dandies and dainty little ladies, but interiorly, really pious from the

heart out and, therefore, pleasing in the eyes of God, their children will never become.

Therefore, Christian parents, do say once for all, seriously and sincerely: "*I and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" Carry this out in regard to the *daily prayers which you should recite with your children.* These prayers offer the *daily bread* which your and your children's souls stand in need of, to become strengthened on the common pilgrim journey to heaven. Carry it out in respect to *the complete sanctification of Sunday.* No one, no man, God Himself does not forbid you an innocent recreation on the day of the Lord. The very best one is that which you seek and find at home, or also out of the house in company with the children. But before recreation you must do what is necessary and useful for a complete sanctification of the Sunday. This means for every genuine Catholic, besides attending Holy Mass to which you and your children are bound under pain of mortal sin, also the hearing of a sermon and, as often as it may be possible, the obtaining of benediction with the Blessed Sacrament during the afternoon service.

A farmer in one of the western states lived many miles away from church. Even though it entailed necessary changing off among the members of the family, he was regularly not only in high Mass, but also in the afternoon devotion. Being asked why he troubled himself so much on Sunday by driving and riding back and forth, he replied: "Even if I should have to ride a horse to death, I would not dare to enter upon the coming week without having received for me and mine the

blessing of the Divine Lord in the Most Holy Sacrament."

Oh, that we had also in the city and everywhere such truly pious fathers and mothers! We should then, in a short time, be enabled to behold the fruits of their piety in their children. Amen.

## 12. Why Piety on the Part of Parents is Necessary to Education.

Pietas ad omnia utilis est.
1. Tim., 4, 8.

"Godliness is profitable to all things."

In the last two instructions we have considered the exterior signs of piety to be exercised on week days and Sundays, which children from their infancy must have before their eyes, in order to be brought up in a genuine Christian manner. Only truly pious parents raise pious and good children. The piety of parents is of universal importance, and in a most special manner, as long as children are yet small and young and, for this very reason, so susceptible of it. Out of love of the parents and their children, and precisely because in this important point there is such a widespread want of right understanding and serious endeavor, I return once more to the subject and say: *Fear of God, piety of parents, especially of mothers, is absolutely necessary for a successful education of children.*

Proofs which demonstrate this necessity, there are many, one clearer and more striking than the other.

1. The proverb says, '*Nobody can give what he does not have.*' If parents are in need of corporal food, maybe the father of the family is addicted to drink and the mother no saving housekeeper, the bodily life of children will waste away, even though here and there, openly or secretly, they may go on a begging tour to grandmother's or to other relatives in order, perchance, to get something to eat. More important than the bodily life, is the supernatural life of grace, which Christ, at Baptism, implanted into the soul of the child. This life, however, also desires and must obtain its nourishment even from tenderest infancy. But this nourishment is precisely the milk and bread of Christian piety. Who shall offer it to the child? In the first place, the mother; for, she is destined and qualified by God, to nurse, not merely the bodily life with her maternal milk, but also to penetrate into the very heart of the child, in order to develop with tender hand the germs of supernatural life and to make them fruitful with the dew of piety. The father shall not merely stand by, idly looking on, but assist by word and example. Now can both do this, if they themselves have no real piety? *Nobody gives what he does not have.* No one can teach what he has not learned and exercised himself. Thus the children of ungodly parents, especially of ungodly mothers, grow up without piety, *i. e.*, without the fresh strength of the interior life of grace. Indeed, as a rule, the ungodliness of parents develops in the hearts of children into a dangerous consumption. Many children die a premature death, because they have inherited

from their parents a deficiency of blood, or even corrupted blood and the first germs of consumption, especially if during the first years these hereditary defects be not counteracted immediately by the most careful nursing and the most wholesome food. So many children die a spiritual death, because the spiritual life fails to receive from parents the necessary care and nourishment. *No one can give what he has not himself.*

2. Parents, especially mothers, who are wanting in the spirit of piety, *will care little* to instill its spirit into their children. They do not even think of it and are wholly absorbed in the exterior cares for worldly advancement. Accordingly, also the education of the children is altogether outward only and worldly. The necessary knowledge to advance in the world, this their children must learn, and, as to exterior manners they are drilled and polished. Prayer, divine service are secondary considerations! Let the teachers and priests take care of them afterwards; for they are paid for it and have nothing else to do! — Moreover, much praying does not amount to anything! For on the same street, or in the next, there are such and such and such who say the Rosary every day and run to church. And, nevertheless, they do not amount to anything, do not grow rich and influential, but remain poor and despised! Thus some parents speak, and their actions correspond with their words. The children hear and see this. And what is the result? It is self-evident in the conduct of many a boy, many a girl of thirteen and fourteen years of age. What little piety discipline

and exercise at school have drilled into them, is shaken off. Their heart was and remains dead and cold. The ungodliness of parents, especially of mothers, like a destructive blight has descended upon and entered into the tender heart of the child. School and church come too late.

3. Even should the parents, convinced as to the influence of piety upon a good education, be willing to take pains in its behalf, success they shall have only, if they rid themselves of their own coldness and tepidity, and thoroughly warm up their own heart.

For, in the first place: *Only what comes from the heart, goes to the heart.* Precisely because of this reason the mere outward talking, scolding, punishing, does not penetrate to the heart, but only to the skin of the ear. Above all, is this the case with the heart of the mother and that of the child. These are so intimately connected with each other, that all true, genuine, deep sentiments of the heart of the mother flow over, as it were, spontaneously into the heart of the child.

Furthermore: *The training of the child to true piety requires many and long years of continuous painstaking.* Whence shall one derive *strength* and *perseverance* for this, especially amid the consuming cares and labors which exterior life entails? *Genuine, true love alone can impart them.* Look at the child when bodily disease imperils its life. The mother often for weeks does not change her clothes. Nothing is too much for her. No painstaking is too great. All words of admonition and entreaty to spare herself, are of no avail. Whence does she

draw this strength and perseverance? From her mother's love and ardent desire, to preserve and revive in her little one the feeble spark of terrestrial life. — And now consider the child's soul and in it the supernatural life, infused through holy baptism. This life must daily, hourly be fostered and nourished and protected against injurious influences. This is impossible without continued, uninterrupted effort and attention. The strength for this, parents and especially the mother draws from the supernatural love for the soul of the child. This, however, in its last term, is nothing else than religion, piety, fear of God.

*Finally: It is certain,* that the religious-moral education of children is a very difficult, aye, the most difficult one of all arts, — a supernatural one. How can parents acquire it? From books, periodicals, words of advice? These may be good enough to give hints and to point out mistakes. But to carry them out successfully, *grace from above* is absolutely necessary and, indeed, in a twofold relation.

Grace must enlighten parents so that daily, hourly, they may discover the right ways and means of religious education. No apprentice, servant or master commits as many faults and mistakes in his handicraft, as very nigh the majority of parents in the education of their children. They have not, to be sure, the evil intention to bring up their children not well, or even badly. And yet, very often their entire education is replete with faults and blunders; the consequences thereof are soon made manifest. Then they wail and

lament: "We have meant it so seriously and taken such great pains." And yet, the boy, the girl has become a failure. Why? You have been lacking the salt of wisdom, and of this latter we read, "*If thou shalt call for wisdom thou shalt find it*" (Prov. 2, 3). Have you prayed often and devoutly: "Heart of Jesus, Heart of Mary, show us how we must bring up and deal with our children?" Pious parents are the best educators, better than the most erudite, the most learned persons.

Furthermore, I presuppose, that you have a most earnest intention to bring up your children well, and that you shirk neither care nor labor to accomplish this end. But then also remember, that in regard to all your educational efforts this word infallibly holds good: *Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase* (1. Cor. 3, 7). Constant prayer, that your labors may be blessed by Heaven, is indispensably necessary to you. Will you exercise it, if you are not thoroughly and sincerely pious!

4. I here subjoin a word of advice for *young men and young ladies*, who contemplate entering upon the holy state of matrimony. I presuppose, that, anteriorly to such a resolve, you pray much and long and reflect maturely. Someone justly observed, that those who are about to get married, ought to ponder much longer and more seriously such a step, than those who choose a religious state. But of this I shall speak some other time. I presuppose that you have already chosen, or intend to choose with God. Hence but two words.

*Look to a rich dowry.* Here I do not mean a

colossal trunk filled with genuine linen, nor a bank-book containing a big amount of savings, nor a clear deed, entitling to the possession of one's own home. All this is not to be despised. But I mean a dowry much more precious, namely *a true spirit of religion and piety, loved and practiced from childhood up.* This is a dowry that endures, always brings luck and blessing, especially for the education of children. Still more: — this piety, later on, can be hardly learned, or acquired only with the greatest difficulty. If the heart of the young man, the young lady, has through impiety become hard and cold and, consequently, also very often seared and charred through sinful, worldly pleasure, *the distress of their woeful condition* may subsequently teach them again to pray; but they will hardly arrive at a true, cordial piety, as is essential for a successful education of children. An awful sadness seizes upon the heart of the priest when in his love for youth and children, he is constrained to see how thoughtlessly and godlessly, (not to use a worse term) so many young men and women cast themselves into the state of matrimony.

*A second warning.* If you have, young man, young woman, taken pains at least to spend your youth in the fear of God, then be sure, that you close this contract for life, only when you are assured by facts, that the other party has done the same. Do not depend on promises, made during the time of courtship. Such promises hereabouts and everywhere are exceedingly cheap. Here is a young man who is a Catholic, *i. e.*, he descends

from Catholic parents. Were he not Catholic, every truly pious maiden would know from the very outset, how she is to answer the question likely to be proposed. I, therefore, assume, that he is a Catholic. Coarse excesses of dissipation, lecherous habits I will not at all suppose or intimate. But how has he lived as a *Christian* youth? Prayer? Forgotten this long while! Has he heard Mass every Sunday? At first still here and there a low Mass without sermon "in a strange church," as he excuses himself when parents inquire; thereupon yet more seldom. Saturday night is spent in carousing; Sunday forenoon in sleeping, only to begin again with pleasure-seeking on Sunday afternoon. Communion at Easter? He does not know himself if it is 5 or 7 or 9 years since the last time. Now he would like to marry a good young lady; he goes again to church, desires to go to confession before his marriage and to fulfil regularly his religious duties! Now, do I say the young lady should not marry such a young man? I shall be on my guard. Only this much I say: I know of cases—and, to be sure, more than one—where the Holy Mass, Confession and Communion, received at marriage, were the last, and where the duped woman usually sheds more tears over the godlessness of her husband than she drinks water. Therefore beware! A longer probation and, consequently, also a putting off of courtship, would be in such cases highly advisable. For it is plainly palpable, that to educate children in godliness and piety, is next to impossible, if an impious father be at the head of a family.

The same admonition applies to the good Christian young man, when he contemplates the choice of a partner for life. The most necessary and most precious dowry on the part of a bride is real piety. To this shall the young man look above all and ascertain its existence. Did the young lady learn and acquire it from infancy, the absence of other merely outward and worldly distinctions, matters, but little or nothing of all, because through *her piety* the greatest and most necessary blessing of a family, viz., the Christian education of children, will be assured. But if a young lady is utterly deficient in piety, if her heart is filled with a worldly spirit and destitute as to the love of God, of Jesus and Mary, then let her beauty and dowry be ever so great; — with beauty and dowry alone, you shall not succeed in bringing up your children. At best, they are only a less valuable, glittering setting, of which the genuine jewel is missing. Does the young man wish to give to the children, who are the hope of matrimony, a true mother, then the question as to the thorough piety of the partner to be chosen for life, must to him be the most important and conclusive one.

For you, my dear parents, the education of children in real piety is your principal duty. Fear of God, piety, are the essential foundation of true temporal and eternal felicity, both for yourselves and your children. Wherefore, practice them yourselves. Ask daily and repeatedly the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary above all to inflame your own hearts with divine love and to

illumine and strengthen yourselves, so that at the glowing heart of father and mother, also the tender hearts of their children may be thoroughly warmed and remain warm. Do this the more, because, alas, the world about you, sad to say, is icy-cold and exposes your children to the danger of having the supernatural life frozen in them. Prepare a warm home for them, a warm family hearth, warm not through coal or wood, but by prayer and all the pious exercises, in which the genuine love of God finds its expression and, at the same time, its necessary nourishment. Then you shall better experience from day to day, that *godliness is profitable to all things.* Even should your children in later life drift into by-ways, the recollection of the pious and happy days of youth, especially of a pious mother, will, as experience has very often demonstrated, prove an efficient means of conversion, of salvation, of bringing back the prodigal son or the wayward daughter into the house of the Heavenly Father.

Many a priest could recount to you the most touching examples of children, especially sons of godly parents, particularly of pious mothers, — who in later life, through the seduction of the world, had drifted into evil ways and for years lived in sin: with the grace of God he succeeded in softening their hardened hearts, yea, in leading back to new life their dead hearts by the simple question: "Had you a good mother?" — "Oh, indeed, she was very good and pious," — "What does she wish, what does she advise you to do now?" — Abundant tears of childlike love for the

pious mother burst forth and melted the ice. The conversion was accomplished.

Therefore, dear parents, I repeat again and again, — *your own piety* is the most efficient means to bring up your children well. Amen.

## 13. Continued Religious Instruction in the Parochial School.

Instruam te in via, qua gradieris.
Ps. 31, 8.

"I will instruct thee in the way in which thou shalt go."

During the first tender years of childhood, parents must lead their children, who are still more the children of God, into habits of religion, fear of the Lord and piety at home. We have considered this duty in several sermons and showed, at the same time, that parents can fulfil it only if they themselves are pious and God-fearing. On this depends either the happiness or the unhappiness of children as well as of parents. The decision lies principally in the hands, or, rather in the hearts of the mothers. A truly pious mother is for the child the greatest blessing; a godless, worldly-minded one the greatest misfortune. In the meantime the child grows up, becomes six or seven years old. As to its further education, there now arise for parents new obligations.

In order to obtain a summary view of them, let us see

1. The necessity of a thorough, religious instruction.

2. Where is this to be sought?
3. What obligations of parents are derived therefrom?

Religion, ordinarily speaking, is the most sublime object which presents itself to the human intellect. Religion, indeed, is the comprehension of all those truths, which unite man with his Creator and Lord, and draw earth up to heaven. Religion is that celestial, bright light, which "enlightens every man that comes into this world," and shows him the paths upon which he as terrestrial pilgrim is to journey back to his Heavenly Father's house. Can religion be and do all this, if man is not even acquainted with it? — Moreover, whatever man does not know, he does not love, does not exercise, especially if this demands sacrifices, which prove difficult to his corrupted nature. Religion, however, is something, which man must embrace with all the fibres of his heart, and, with all the strength of his will, make the criterion of his thoughts and desires, his deeds and omissions, in a word, of his whole life. Will he not, generally speaking, do this in the degree in which he, by means of a thorough knowledge, has received religion as a spiritual possesson into his soul? Necessary in a very special manner, can this knowledge become on account of exterior circumstances and conditions, in which a person lives. In entirely Catholic regions and countries, for instance, it may not be so necessary, at least not require such deep thoroughness: for there the whole life is Catholic, borne up by religion. Such a life carries individual persons along, even should

they have learned and acquired only what is most necessary, namely the first rudiments of religion. The genuine Catholic life around him, is, as it were, a continued, palpable object lesson for him, a lesson, which, for great and small, is and remains always the most effectual means for a good life. But how is it, if you and your children live at a time and in a world where gross infidelity, expressed and avowed irreligion, nay, open hostility to the only true Christian religion has pervaded the great masses of the people? Into this time and world your children are very soon to be cast: — for, it cannot be avoided, in this world they must pass their life. Scorn and aspersion, even material disadvantages await them at every step and turn, if they wish to live up to their religion. Open and covert attacks, calumny, misrepresentation, glittering sophisms are hurled at them. Must then your children, boys and girls, not be firmly grounded in their faith and, by thorough instruction in their Christian religion, have gained the certain conviction — In *our* faith, in *our* religion we present unto God a *reasonable service* (Rom. 12. 1); *we know, whom we believe* (2 Tim. 1, 12). Jesus Christ, the infallible God, and the church of Christ which is under His direction and that of the Holy Ghost — they are esteemed higher by us than the swaggerers in the saloon and in shops, higher than those miserable newspaper scribes, who dip their venomous quill into the smutty ink of hell and who preach to the credulous masses the falsehoods and misrepresentations of the *father of lies* as so much infallible truth. Shall your children, from the very outset,

be dumb, in answer to all these assaults of infidelity and irreligion, — incapable to distinguish truth from error and without being able to defend it in case of necessity ? This for them would be a dishonor and a shame. Nay still more, it might very easily prove for them an occasion to backslide from the true faith. I know very well that this falling off — so awfully frequent among the immigrants to this country and their children of the first and second generations — has its ultimate reason in the heart which had previously been spoilt. For always and everywhere is this infallible word applicable, "*The fool saith in his heart : There is no God*" (Ps. 13, 1). He who has frequent occasion to deal more intimately with the vast number of these backsliders, is constrained to exclaim time and again: *Here there was a lack of catechetical instruction.* The want of a thorough instruction in religion has become for these unfortunate ones the evil beginning of a bad end. Wherefore, thorough religious instruction is for your children, in this country and everywhere, not alone of incalculable importance, but absolutely necessary.

2. Where and how shall they preserve the same ?

*At home ? In the family ?* The family, certainly, is the best school for children and of these parents are the God-appointed teachers and educators. Were they therefore *able*, on the whole, to be such teachers and did they, aside of their cares and labors for the advancement of the family, possess sufficient time and leisure to take on themselves the manifold and vexatious cares of teaching, we

should, to say it briefly, have an almost paradisaical condition within the Catholic church. But, as matters are at present, we cannot, or would not in a hundred or a thousand cases conceive of scarcely *one* family as possible, or actually existing, where father and mother, either directly by themselves, or, through so called private tutors, are fully able to provide for a thorough, religious instruction of their children. By way of exception of course, there actually may be conditions where father and mother must be pretty nigh the only religious teachers for their children. Whilst a missionary in the western states, I have met repeatedly with Catholic German immigrants, who for many years could not be visited and cared for by a Catholic priest, and who, at most only now and then, on foot or in a wearisome wagon drawn by oxen, traveled many miles to receive the Sacraments, or to have a child christened. And yet, I found these parents *and their children, who were growing up, well-instructed* Catholics. To the query: "How did you manage to accomplish all this?" the true-hearted father, or the plain mother answered, "We brought with us from Germany our diocesan catechism, good old Goffine and the 'Lives of the Saints.' This was our Catholic library. These we read, studied, rehearsed with the children in the evening after the day's work, and especially on Sundays. At the same time we prayed diligently to God to supply for our faults and defects. Thus we remained Catholics and our children have received a Catholic instruction and education. Just examine them." — And I examined

them and found repeatedly, to my astonishment and my joy, that the children of these parents understood their religion better than many children who were brought up in the city, and for years had attended the Catholic school. But, as I say, these are rare exceptions, or rather, it is a condition of necessity, such as is found mostly yet, or at least to a certain degree, in the old country in some districts where Catholics are sparsely settled; in this country, thanks be to God, the condition referred to, is disappearing more and more. The rule is, parents on an average lack time and aptitude to instruct their children thoroughly in religion. Where then shall they get this instruction?

*Where and by whom shall your children be initiated into a solid knowledge of the true religion of Jesus Christ?* I need only subjoin this to what we saw in the fifth sermon when speaking of a thorough school education. Recall to your mind, Christian parents, the day that your children were baptized. These at that time, became truly the *children of a mother*, who has received directly from Christ the *right* and, with it, the *duty* to lead you and your children into the true religion. This mother is the Church, founded by Christ. To her and to her commissioned teachers He, once for all times yet to come, said: "*Teach all nations . . ., teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" This right and this duty the Church, *i. e.*, the one true Church, founded by Christ, has clung to and exercised during very nigh two-thousand years. No earthly might could tear out of her arms and from her heart the little ones, who

assuredly constitute the most important part, yea, the hope and future of *all nations*. From the first ages she did not build a cathedral, a cloister, a temple for her King, dwelling in her midst under the species of bread, without erecting at the side of them also a school for His little ones, the children. Nay, often, more than in one place, she has carried out the injunction of an illustrious prelate: "*First a school for the children; then a church, a Tabernacle for Jesus Christ, the Friend of children.*" Her missionaries among the Indians of America, the Negroes of Africa, the hordes of Asia follow this principle to this day. — As a loving mother who is solicitous for the twofold welfare of her little ones, the temporal and the eternal, she has everywhere arranged her schools in such a manner as to instruct the children not in religious truths merely, but so as to impart to them also such worldly knowledge, which is useful and necessary for their temporal advancement. And as the priests alone would not suffice to take upon themselves the entire burden of this instruction and education, for this reason her fertile and universal mother's love has called into life everywhere religious societies, also Catholic seminaries for male and female teachers, in which magnanimous youths and maidens are prepared to devote their entire life solely and entirely to the instruction and education of the darling little ones of their heavenly King. In these schools, therefore, in the Catholic parochial schools, children are well provided with the necessary knowledge, so that they may thoroughly be enabled to pass through this earthly life; more specially, how-

ever, is their intellect enlightened and their will trained and strengthened so as to make it possible for them to reach eternal life with safety. Thus Christ fulfils in regard to the children the promise, "*I will instruct you in the way in which you shall go,*" by means of His Church, through her parochial schools.

To be brief, it is, therefore, an undeniable historical fact that our Church for centuries has been the educator of the world. Until well into the depth of the Middle Ages, the cathedral, convent and parochial schools, were almost the only schools in existence. The entire religious and secular education was imparted through them almost exclusively. Nay still more, these schools were places not merely of *instruction*, but also of *education*, *i. e.*, the entire instruction, also that in secular science, was imbued with religion; these schools were the leaven which saturated the children and, through them, all mankind. They where the *civilizing power*.

But now, beginning with the sixteenth century, the ungrateful children for a great part tore away from the loving mother, yea, turned more and more, as is peculiar to ingratitude, in bitter antagonism against her. And here it was precisely the school, the Christian school, against which they everywhere raised their weapons. Heresy, and what grew out of it with startling fecundity, *infidelity*, recognized but too readily, that he who strikes at the Christian school, hits the very heart of the Church. Since then down to our own day, we have the so called *school question*, *the fight for the*

*possession of the school*. On the one side are arranged the schools without faith, schools without any religion, schools of the state built upon the airy foundation of a constitution manufactured by human beings; on the other side are the denominational schools, not state schools, but positively Christian and thoroughly religious schools. The battle is on everywhere, in the Old as well as the New World. Our Mother the Church, deprived everywhere of exterior power, of worldly influence and not less of rich material resources, has a hard lot in this struggle. However, she always again derives fresh, indomitable courage from the words, from the injunction of her Divine Founder: "*Suffer the little ones to come unto me and refuse them not*,"—and not less from the happy confidence, that

3. good Catholic parents will ever actively and with one accord support her, the Church, in her solicitude for the school.

I will not speak to-day of *how parents can do this directly*, for instance, by naturally aiding in the establishment and support of Catholic schools, by manfully defending with lawful means their inalienable rights to impart a religious education to their children, rights, which, as they know, are secure and safe-guarded in the hands of the Church alone, whom Christ has appointed the teacher of all nations. I will not even touch upon the duty of sending children to the denominational, Catholic school, wherever any such is offered to them. For, however important and incisive these and other obligations actually are, they differ according to the various conditions of time and place.

I merely repeat here what I have intimated in a former discourse (5. sermon), that good Catholic parents are always ready, for the sake of supporting and elevating their schools, to follow the wish and desire of their Church, in as far as it is made known to them by those who have the care of their souls, viz., by their ruling pastors, and, above all, by the supreme teacher of all, the Holy Father at Rome. —

Because of the importance and necessity of a thorough religious instruction, such as we have begun to consider, let me say briefly: *The home, the family must go hand in hand with the school, — must assist the religious instruction of the school.*

In the fifth sermon I have already spoken to you of *supporting the school instruction by means of necessary repetitions and preparations at home*, in the family, therefore, under the supervision and the assistance of parents. Then I had in view only the aid in acquiring such secular knowledge as is necessary for the temporal advancement of children.

Far more necessary than all this science, is the knowledge of religion. Wherefore, also the aid of parents in this matter is far more necessary. There is no need of proving this to parents who in any way realize this truth and love their children.

Besides, this assistance is *easy* and *sweet*, provided they know how to take hold of it rightly. The mother will always find some moments, in which, when occupied with light, not incompatible work, she can hear and explain Catechism and have Bible History read to her. It is astonishing, how far a truly pious mother, who avails herself of

such occasions perseveringly, can lead her children in a knowledge of religious truths, and, what is still more important, ground them as firmly in the same. If St. Frances de Chantal, as a child of scarcely five years, silenced a high-bred Calvinist by solid argumentation, we must, aside of a special assistance of grace, recognize therein also the influence of her pious mother. — The good Christian father finds, if he but wills, at the close of his day's work, the best enjoyment and recreation in doing likewise. More leisure is offered on Sunday for repetition and preparation of religious instruction. The Gospel of the Sunday with the explanation by good old Goffine, the homily, or sermon at church, a suitable "Lives of the Saints," a good Catholic weekly, offer ever new and appropriate variation. The influence of this *persevering* assistance by parents on the intellect, heart and will of children, is incalculable. Children naturally are light-minded and inclined to play and levity. The seriousness of religion is too far away from them. But if they see what weight father and mother put on it, how both these with one accord again and again urge its importance and lay the chief stress upon the knowledge of religion, — and all this not gloomily, dryly and in a repulsive manner, but with that attractive power, which is peculiar to genuine love and piety — then the same conviction will lay hold on the heart of children. They will take pains to give pleasure to their parents by the cards of merit they obtain in catechism and bible history. Then *all is gained!*

Incalculable, however, is the *disadvantage* of

children whose parents do not support the religious instruction imparted at school. Represent to yourselves such a family. Father and mother are wholly indifferent as to the progress of their children in religion, they never inquire, never encourage. At most, now and then, the command may be given in words of reproach "Learn your catechism!" On Sundays never a word about the homily, or sermon, because the parents themselves never hear any, but seek to pacify God and their conscience with a low Mass! Not a thought of any religious, edifying reading in common, so useful and necessary to instil the light and warmth of religion into the head and heart of the little ones as well as of adults! Nay, there are cases, where father and mother, especially if they get to hear complaints from priest or teacher about the poor progress of their children in religious instruction, say in a really impertinent manner, and in presence of their children: "That is none of our business! We can't bother ourselves with it. For this reason we send the children to the parochial school and pay for it!" — There even are cases where the impious father, the worldly-minded mother work directly in opposition to the school: "You learn nothing but praying and catechism. With that you kill your time. But with that one does not get through the world nowadays. Commend me to the schools which do not while away the time with such stuff." — What fruits are we to expect here? Teachers and priests in school can grasp, as it were, with hands the difference between the poor children of such parents and those of a good

Christian family, and the religious indifference in the first years after leaving school, — yea, the actual falling off of such unhappy children, shows that the poisonous fruits have already ripened.

Wherefore, Christian parents, if you love your children, if you have your own salvation and that of your children at heart, aid by your co-operation at home the religious instruction at school, in order that your children may be grounded as deeply and firmly in the eternal truths of salvation, that later on no jibe, no sneer, no trick, no fraud, not even temporal advantages or disadvantages, can make them vacillate. See to it that religion will pass into the flesh and blood of your children, and thus become the true and most important question of their existence.

And do not think that *then life will grow dark, dreary, sad and melancholy.* Innocent recreations and amusements, above all in common, are not excluded. Aside of all this, is not the blessing of religion and piety, which through your co-operation you draw down upon your household, a benediction and happiness you otherwise seek in vain and which you cannot purchase with any, even the greatest amount of money? Can you be happy as parents, if your children are not brought up well? Are you not, on the contrary, even in the midst of poverty and outward misery, exceedingly and unspeakably happy, if you can say with confidence, that a circle of good children surrounds you? But how do your children become good? Only and alone through the influence of religion; only and alone when this heavenly leaven imbues

their entire being. But that this may be accomplished, the few hours in school are not sufficient. The daily, constant influence of the family must be added, and thus assist the school. Amen.

## 14. Solicitude to confirm Children in Religion and Piety after their First Holy Communion.

Instruam te in via qua gradieris.
Ps. 31, 8.

"I will instruct thee in the way in which thou shalt go."

If parents are desirous to lead their children back to their heavenly home, they must, above all, instruct them thoroughly in the Christian religion; for this is the only way to heaven. And such instruction must begin in tenderest childhood, where the best and most indispensable educator is the mother. Alas for the child, that has no pious mother! And happy, yea thrice blessed is the child who with its mother's milk for the support of tender bodily life, can, at the same time, imbibe from the fountain of a pious mother's heart rich nourishment for the supernatural life of the soul!—

When the child is growing up, the Church, being the mother of the supernatural life, comes to the assistance of parents by means of her schools. If parents work hand in hand with the Church and her priests and second the efforts, which the priests and their helpers under their supervision make at church and school in behalf of the religious in-

struction of children, they may cherish the confident hope, that their little ones will be grounded so firmly in the knowledge and love of the Christian Faith, that no sad falling away need be feared, and that they will steadfastly hold to it in later years.

Thus we arrive at the time of the child's First Communion. But does the care of parents for its religious education cease now, that is to say, for the time that follows after First Communion? Not at all. Let me draw your attention to a few points without the observance of which it may easily happen, that all the pains taken during the years of schooling, are rendered fruitless.

1. Should it at all be possible, send your children after their First Holy Communion *yet one year to the parochial school, i. e.*, if they possess the necessary talent and you have sufficient means, or give them an opportunity to acquire a superior education in *some higher, thoroughly Catholic institution*. I have given you in the sixth sermon the same advice with regard to the best preparation of children for an earthly career. Here I have their religious education in view. The mind of children is now maturing; the grace of the holy Sacraments begins to operate oftener and more effectually within their soul. The school or the college keeps them at least for a time aloof from the numberless perils which the world, notably nowadays, prepares for faith, religion and good morals. Thus you may hope that your children will become firmly and deeply rooted in religion so as to pass without injury through the storms of life which,

ere long, shall break in upon them. But if, on the contrary, you should plunge your children into the full tide of life immediately after their First Holy Communion, you may witness, right in the first year, the most unfortunate change.

2. At all events, see to it that your children frequent regularly during the first three years after First Communion the so called Christian instruction, or, as they are wont to say hereabouts, *Sunday school*. To show the profit derived therefrom, or even the necessity of this Christian doctrine, I need not use many words. The years after First Holy Communion are of all the most perilous. They are the so called years of rowdyism, which mark the transition from childhood to the sentiments of maturer age. In this process many a young life is lost, if precautions are neglected. The Church exerts her care by means of Christian doctrine, which, we find, is held on Sunday afternoons in about all the Catholic congregations of the old and new worlds, unless too great distance and dispersion of members render it impossible for any one to attend. The object of such instruction is not merely to repeat the Catechism learnt at school, but also to insure a deeper understanding thereof, which will be in keeping with a more ripened age, and is so very necessary to combat the manifold danger of losing the faith, — a danger which children, when in the society of the world, often encounter. The question now arises: Have parents any obligations in regard to this Christian doctrine, or Sunday school? — By far more yet than in regard to the parochial school, where

priests and teachers have the children under control by means of a firm routine of daily school work. After First Communion, however, these children are almost entirely withdrawn from the direct influence of the priest. He can call off the names, or control the presence or absence in one way or another; but he has no power whatever to hold them to a steady attendance at the Sunday school. Still less is his influence to prevail on them, that they prepare themselves by committing to memory in advance, so that the explanation about to be given, may be grasped more readily. His hands are bound, as it were. His personal qualities and his faculty to attract the children may offset in a manner the disadvantage under which he is laboring. Yet, these qualifications cannot be presupposed everywhere, and, moreover, will meet with effectual success only with the better class of children. On the whole, he is dependent on the parents as regards attendance at, preparation for, and behavior during Sunday school. Thanks be to God, there yet are fathers and mothers, who second the priest with this necessary assistance. Such parents do not content themselves with merely saying in one way or other: "Go to Sunday school!" — but they see to it that their children get the time and leisure for a suitable preparation by reading up and learning by heart the lesson given. They inquire personally, by going with their children, or following later on, if they are actually at church in their appointed place, or whether they allowed themselves to be misled by evil companions to stay away and to run

about. They are of opinion, that they themselves also can still learn much from listening to the instruction given at Sunday school; hence they like to be present and are glad when their children distinguish themselves by answering the questions that are proposed. They incite their children to zeal and perseverance by praising, or, if necessary, also by chiding them. In a word, they work hand in hand with the priest. And experience teaches, that such harmonious co-operation produces the best results among our rising Catholic youth.

But there are also parents of another description, and, quite naturally, also other children who are obliged to attend Sunday school. Many of the latter, especially in the larger city parishes, the priest does not see at all any more after their First Communion; and among them are not only such who, on account of poverty, must go right off and hire out, but also those who remain within the parish, but simply stay at home.

There are others who are exceedingly irregular in attending Sunday school and do not deign to offer even a word of excuse to the priest. Of course, they do not consider themselves "children" anymore, you know.—Not unfrequently, too, their behavior during Sunday school shows so little of the respect due to the house of God, that the much molested priest, who, as a rule, is already overfatigued with the exertions of the Sunday, must strain all his physical and moral energy to preserve some kind of order.

This state of affairs, alas! is but too true and widespread among the children, who are obliged

to attend Sunday school. And who is to blame? Without fear or awe I blame the conscience of parents, particularly of fathers. As long as these show no interest in the Sunday school, nor urge, nor punish when necessary, nor see for themselves, because they have — alas! alas! — the evil habit of never attending year in and year out afternoon services, neither on Sundays nor Holy Days, in a word, as long as parents, especially fathers do not co-operate with the priest by word and, still more, by their own example to make the attendance at Sunday school regular and fruitful: so long the labor of the priest in behalf of the children is in vain. Do not say: "That does not concern us; we cannot bother ourselves with it; we tell the children to go — that's enough. Sunday afternoon we desire to have for our rest and recreation, or also, for our business."

I repeat, do not speak thus, my dear friend. The obligations you have towards your children accompany you day after day and are urgent most of all, on Sundays; because during the week you are engaged too much with worldly cares and labors. Wherefore, beware of sins of omission in regard to the thorough instruction of your offspring in religion, such as is offered them in the Sunday school after their First Communion. Should your children lose religion and piety, nay, even faith itself through your own fault, *you* would be lost! Wherefore, do your duty, your full duty.

3. Another highly effectual means to preserve and to firmly ground your children in religion and piety during the perilous years that follow First

Communion, is offered to you by the Church in her *religious confraternities for the young*, chiefly in her *sodalities of the Bl. Virgin Mary*. We read of many saintly and holy parents who placed their offspring from their tenderest infancy under the special protection of the dear Mother of God. The result of such confidence on the part of fathers and mothers was, that their children became holy. Do the same, dear parents, not merely by praying ever and always to Mary for your children, but especially by urging them to join as soon as possible, *i. e.*, as soon as their age allows, a sodality of the Bl. Virgin, or some other religious ecclesiastical society, if such a one exists in the parish and is placed under the direction of the priest. The motherly look, the maternal love and influence of Mary, our Heavenly Mother, are more powerful than yours. By joining sodalities of the Bl. Virgin your children place themselves in a most special manner under her protection. Do lend your help, then, so that they may fulfil the few and easy requirements of the sodality faithfully and conscientiously, attend regularly the sodality meetings in which they are ever instructed and encouraged anew by an appropriate instruction, and admonish them to take part in the monthly general Communion. Having done this, you may pray with increased confidence: "O Heavenly Mother protect Thine and our children! Manifest in them the truth of the saying, that *a faithful servant of Mary shall not be lost.*"

4. The last means to firmly establish your children in religion and piety is one, which you must provide yourselves, namely a *Christian life and*

*character in your family.* Just as a wholesome medicine is compounded of many herbs, so too many parts must combine and co-operate in order to create such a life. To it belong amongst other things family prayer, the reading in common of books and publications that edify and amuse, family plays and recreation, visits paid in common to relatives and acquaintances, little feasts and gatherings, for instance on the name's day of parents and children, when better fare and the presentation of gifts should not be wanting; a Christmas tree, but not it alone, however richly laden it may be; it should be accompanied by an appropriate representation of the Crib of Bethlehem, above all of the Heavenly Mother and the Christ-child: a firm holding together and co-operation of all in the interests of the family; therefore, also free discussion, especially when the children are more advanced in age. All this must proceed from a genuine love of home, even though it were but a rented hovel, as also from a true pride and ambition to elevate the family. Then only is there any truth in the saying: "No place like home."

Are there still such families to be found? Very few! Most generally, especially in smaller and larger towns, there is no family hearth, no real home, but in its stead—boarding houses, which are kept by the parents who are the landlords. The father earns the necessary money; the mother, like a degraded servant girl, must wash, mend and cook. The children are the boarders. Even before they have come of age, they pay so and so many dollars per week or month by way of board — most

generally less than they would have to pay in any other boarding house. The balance they keep for themselves, as a rule not to save, but to squander it. With the payment of this paltry boarding money, they imagine they have fulfilled all their obligations toward their parents, even when these are old, feeble, and sorely in need of help. And the poor parents are obliged but too often to overlook all and say nothing, instead of chiding and punishing, commanding and forbidding. Thus they complain, saying: "We must live from the boarding money of our children. For this reason we cannot oppose them as we would, or, even as we should; otherwise they will forsake us entirely as they already have threatened repeatedly, and then we shall be left helpless in our old age!" I see a beautiful fruit tree standing in a garden. Trunk and branches are fresh and healthy. The tree is covered with buds and flowers and promises a plentiful crop. I congratulate the gardener on his bright prospects for a rich reward in compensation of his labor. — Such is the truly Christian family, which the Heavenly Gardener regards with pleasure and hope as to the future. — After a short while I return to the same garden. What do I behold? The trunk is snapped and split, the branches are strewed right and left, torn and broken. Near by the gardener is standing with a sad face. What has happened? — Lightning struck the tree! My joy, my hope is gone! — Such is the torn, rent, unchristian family, — a real source of sorrow for the heart of the Heavenly Gardener! Perhaps the trunk, the parents, will

yet be saved and not cast into the fire. But what will become of the branches and limbs which the windstorm tore off and carried away in all directions? What will become of the children?!

And what hostile power directed the lightning into this or that family which at first seemed so promising? — Several years ago the "Vendetta," which is the chief lodge in Italy, issued a circular to the Br:. Br:. with instructions how they were to propagate the lodge amongst Catholics. The chief means recommended to them was: Direct your efforts against the family! Cut off its head! — *i. e.* draw the father away from the family. Turners' and singing societies, feasts, banquets, excursions offer you an excellent opportunity to do this. In this manner you undermine what little prosperity the family may possess; the daily wages will not suffice for the increasing expenses. Thus you carry dissatisfaction into the family. The father feels happier in jolly company than in his quiet home. The children that are growing up, and even the wife, are estranged from the father and will soon reflect: "What suits father, suits us." Misery and discontent will grow from day to day. Now is the time to approach with the invitation to join the secret society which you may describe as the last means of salvation that is left for them. — This is the truly diabolical plot of the Vendetta! As a matter of fact, this plan has been and actually is carried out without that Catholics, and especially Catholic fathers, so much as notice what is being plotted against them, and whither they are being dragged. This is, of a truth,

the enemy who *oversowed cockle while men were asleep* (Matth. 13, 25). And yet, we may completely ignore the direct or indirect efforts of the Secret Societies for the destruction of the family. The whole human society, by its general mode of living, is doing its work which looks toward the disruption of the family and the separation of parents from their children, and children from their parents. — If you wish to uphold Christian family life as a means of religion and piety, you must swim against the stream; you must not act according to the example which you behold about you on all sides, but as your conscience and the duties of your station in life demand.

This is difficult, no doubt, dear parents; but you can do it, if you, fathers and mothers, ask God's help in common and then work together harmoniously. To do this let the thought strengthen you, that Christian family life is *necessary* in order to preserve and render fruitful the seeds of religion and piety which the Church and school have implanted into the hearts of your children. Where the atmosphere, warmth, ground and soil of a truly Christian family life are wanting to children, there no religious life can thrive. All is black and barren and dead. The countless number of fallen away Catholics obtains its principal increase from families, that lead no Christian family life. And, if you look forward into eternity and desire to realize the fond hope of enjoying one day the bliss in the house of your Heavenly Father, as a re-united family of parents and children, then see to it that you now conduct here on earth a truly Christian home. Amen.

## 15. Watchfulness over Children, above all at Home.

Mittam angelum meum, qui praecedat te, et custodiat in via, et introducat in locum, quem paravi. Ex. 23, 20.

"I will send my Angel, who shall go before thee, and keep thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared."

The most important, if not the only task, which the Heavenly Father imposes on the soul of parents in regard to their children, and on the fulfilment of which the salvation of both parents and children depends, is this: Lead your children back to Heaven, to the Heavenly Father, from whose hands you have received them. Now, the only way which leads back to Heaven, is the Christian religion. It is, therefore, the first duty of parents to acquaint their little ones with this religion. We have already shown in detail, how this is to be accomplished. Just as a mother's milk is the best food for the tender bodily life of the babe, so the *pious mother* must infuse knowledge, and love of religion and piety from her own heart

into the heart of the infant, in order to stimulate and strengthen the supernatural life, which, by means of baptismal regeneration, has been implanted into the soul. Alas, if this should not be done; alas, if we priests should so often be brought face to face with the sad case, where of many children, six and seven years old who for the first time are received into school, but very few are able to make the sign of the cross, or to recite the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary* halfway decently. Everything depends on the exertions with which parents second the efforts of church and school, when the children, who have attained an age of six or seven years, are brought to the parochial school to be instructed by the Church, the teacher of mankind. Parents must work, as it were, hand in hand with priests and teachers; they must send their children to school *regularly*, and *in time* and see to it that they *repeat and prepare* their lessons diligently at home. They must, in a *truly Christian family life*, provide the right atmosphere and congenial warmth so that the grains of good seed implanted by the Church into the heart of the child, may sprout and develop. Only when this is done can there be any foundation for the hope that the children will grow up to remain good Catholic Christians. But if this be not done, — and how often, alas, is this the case — then in spite of the efforts of the parochial school, of priest and teacher; in spite of First Communion, we have, as it were, in the short space of one night, a youth, which fills the heart of hell alone with diabolical joy, because it is worse than a rising generation of heathens possibly could be.

Let me hope, my dear Christian parents, that you faithfully and conscientiously fulfil this first and most important obligation, of filling your children with the spirit of the Christian religion, and thus lead them on the way to Heaven. There is at the same time with this duty, a *second one* which accompanies you almost throughout your whole life, namely, the *obligation of overseeing and watching the children*. The purpose of this vigilance is to preserve them from going astray from the straight path that leads to heaven, and to avoid Satan and his accomplices, so as not to be dragged on to the road of sin, which, ere long, will lead them to eternal perdition. You are the *visible guardian angels* assigned by the Heavenly Father to watch over your children whom He loves as His own little ones, in order to keep them on the way that leads to their Heavenly Father's house and to conduct them back into its bliss:

Let us see briefly: —

1. the necessity of this watchfulness;
2. how it should be exercised by parents at home.

1. The necessity of this watchfulness is self-evident. Holy Scripture repeatedly admonishes men to be watchful. When Our Lord says: "*Watch ye and pray that ye enter not into temptation*" (Matth. 26. 41), he places vigilance on a level with prayer, and thus emphasizes the necessity of the former as much as the latter. And St. Peter gives the reason why watchfulness is so necessary in these earnest words: "*Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour*"

(1. Peter. 5. 8). To devour immortal souls, *i. e.*, to tear them away from Heaven down into the abyss of hell, is the only and ultimate design of Satan in all the temptations, with which he plies poor pilgrims on earth, sometimes directly in person, sometimes indirectly, and still more frequently, by means of accomplices, of evil companions and bad associations and the whole world round about us. Therefore — Be watchful! — an admonition which holds good for all Christians without exception. You may boldly say, that of one hundred sins, ninety nine would not be committed, were people to exercise this watchfulness, which, above all, consists in *avoiding the occasion*. Of a certain stupid, long-eared animal it is said, that it never bumps itself or falls twice at the same place in passing along a road, or crossing a bridge, because thereafter it always keeps shy of the spot. Again and again, however, the devil succeeds in dragging man, the Christian, to the same place, person, occasion, and causes him to fall again and again.

Now is such watchfulness not also necessary with children? And, as they cannot themselves exercise it, must not this vigilance be practiced by the parents? The delicate, *bodily* life of the babe is exposed to so many dangers into which the inexperienced child casts itself thoughtlessly, that parents, especially mothers, must have, as it were, a hundred eyes; hence, there is reason for the saying, that the child, to be brought up, stands in need of two guardian angels.

But still greater and far more numerous are

the perils, to which the child's interior life of grace is exposed from the first awakening of reason. The sight of an innocent child's pure soul gives hellish torture to Satan: hence, he seeks to draw it into sin by evil inclinations, which, owing to original sin, grow luxuriantly within its heart. Being the sworn enemy of its soul, he seeks to allure and excite the evil appetites in the heart of the child with the tempting apples of paradise which he displays before its eyes. Finally, he directs but too adroitly the impulse of imitation, which lies dormant in every human being, towards the evil examples with which he cunningly surrounds the little one.

In such circumstances, how easy does seduction to sin become, especially since the child, being as yet wholly without discernment and experience, is under the influence of sensual impressions and grasps at everything that appears to be beautiful, sweet and agreeable, even though this be oftentimes more dangerous to the soul than a keen-edged razor or a sweet poison to the body! How readily does the child fall into sin, especially since it recoils from whatever is hard and bitter, thus often taking only when compelled the medicine that has a disagreeable taste, and struggling obstinately against an incision into the festering wound!

You see, therefore, — unless children are to become an easy and sure prey of seduction — parents must watch over and look out for them with the utmost precaution. Such watchfulness on the part of parents is absolutely necessary,

even more so than the care and vigilance with which they seek to protect their house and homestead, their money and valuables against fire, thieves and robbers. At all times has this vigilance been necessary, but most of all in our own days. For infidelity and the ever increasing spirit of irreligion and immorality, afford the infernal Herod countless tools and agents ; he needs to give them but a sign to pounce on innocent children, not for the purpose of murdering them with the sword, but, what is worse, to kill their soul by seducing them to commit sin.

2. Now with what should this watchfulness busy itself ? For the time being let us remain in the home, between the four walls of the parental house.

Above all you must observe and watch over each child *in particular*. Evil inclinations, which are a consequence of original sin, and individual faults of character, which it has perhaps inherited from you, will very soon manifest themselves exteriorly. The babe in the cradle, or on its mother's arm, already has its self-will and seeks to assert it by kicking and laying about with its arms, and by crying and bawling. Soon after it shows its peevishness in eating and drinking, becomes envious when its brothers and sisters chance to get a little more or something better, is quarrelsome, self-willed at play, saucy when it is corrected or punished. The spirit of lying leads it to deny faults which it has committed, to accuse falsely its own brothers and sisters who are innocent, and the evil concupiscence of the flesh incites it not merely to

indulge secretly in the contents of the sugar bowl and to retain or to steal pennies in order to buy dainties, but also to commit many faults against purity, which, alas, are but too often the sad beginning of a miserable end. — Among the girls there is developed but too often and too early that vanity and love for dress, so peculiar to the daughters of Eve.

These and other vicious propensities are to be found in a greater or less degree with all children. They are the weeds which the enemy of God and of His little ones has sown in the small garden of the child's heart. Wherefore, is it not a matter of necessity that parents know these faults, and indeed of each child individually, so as to check them *in time* and by applying the *right remedies?* But, how can they learn to know them, unless they observe and, in a manner, study the child? The heart of children ought to be to parents like an open book. Many a household has its family-physician. Through many years' treatment he becomes acquainted with the bodily condition of all the members, and, therefore, when his services are required, finds immediately an efficacious remedy. There are many parents, however, who are totally unacquainted with the condition of character and the spirit of their children, and, therefore, in treating and educating them, make one mistake after the other, committing blunder upon blunder. Thus, for instance, they often treat all children in the same manner, although their different faults, like so many different maladies, should also be treated in different ways. There

are, indeed, parents who *intentionally* as it were, and *from a false, ape-like love*, allow themselves to remain blind in regard to the vicious dispositions of their little ones. And yet their faults are often so much in evidence, that they could almost be grasped with hands. The cub, however, by all means must be represented as being a veritable little angel without fail or foible, and woe to him who would think or say otherwise! And should this little cherub betray so many a trait, which, far from being angelic, is exceedingly imp-like, then the parents, and very often the father, in presence of the mother, and the mother, in presence of the father, become the most zealous attorneys of their youngster in the effort to wash him clean of any and every charge brought forward. Open misdemeanors are excused as being mere childish mirth and play; when the cub pouts, or shows its stubbornness, or always insists on being right, it is praised as having a commendable, strong will. The boy is urged not to submit or put up with anything from any one at play, but to fight then and there; and the vanity of the girl, or rather the little toy puppet, is nurtured by a vain mother in such a fashion, that one would fain exclaim to both of them: "*Just wait; your pride shall yet have its fall!*" —

O Christian parents! In every child there dwell, as it were, both an angel and a devil. The disposition for the latter the babe brings into the world with original sin; the disposition for an angel is implanted through the sacrament of Baptism. You have the sacred and all important duty to destroy the disposition that leads to hell,

and to develop the one for heaven. This double task you can perform only when you thoroughly understand the child. You will never accomplish this, however, except you pray constantly for the light from above, and watch continually with undimmed vision over your children.

Wherefore, take pains to keep the exterior conduct and deportment of your children as much as possible under strict supervision. For, their outward behavior is the mirror in which you can observe their interior disposition with its good or evil impulses. This becomes the easier for you as your little ones have not as yet learned the questionable and dangerous art of being deceitful, that is to say, pretending outwardly to be other than they are in reality.

Be watchful also as to the association of your children *among themselves*. The devil prowls about everywhere, also in your house. He succeeds only too often to lead children, even those that are still small, into sin through their own brothers and sisters, and oftentimes for this very reason, because the parents, especially the mother neglects to have a sharp lookout on them. Do not permit your children, brothers and sisters, indiscriminately to play in nooks and corners that are hidden from view, but keep them under your own eyes, or, at least, so that you can easily observe their conduct and appear among them unexpectedly. Above all take good care of their holy modesty which is so necessary a safeguard of innocence. Thus it happens that when children wash, dress or undress in the morning and evening, or when they

sleep together, — which, by the bye, if at all possible, *should be avoided entirely*, — the coarsest faults are committed, — faults which but too often leave a deep rankling wound in the soul of the little ones.

If you have *other persons* in the house, *e. g.* hired help, relatives, boarders, see well to it, lest you harbor at close range to your children a wolf in sheep's clothing. Examples of seduction through such parties are of but too frequent occurrence. On the other hand, there are also very sad cases where innocent servants have been seduced by the children of the house. Money and possessions you seek to protect against thieves and robbers; but more precious than all your money are the souls of your children and their innocence. Hence, there is no use to cry and lament later on, "Alas, who would have ever thought of such a thing!" I answer: You ought to have thought of it, and it was your duty to guard against it. The responsibility rests with you.

Have an eye, too, on the *silent associates* of your little ones in your house, I mean pictures, books, publications and newspapers. What sort of pictures do your children bring home, which often times are hidden and looked at and passed around to one another without your seeing it? Examine their pockets and trunks. The mischief of indecent and highly dangerous pictures is increasing and becoming more general from day to day. Everywhere you see them displayed in windows and show cases. Very often they are distributed in stores by way of wrappers for purchased articles, or, as

so many "beautiful gifts" thrown in the bargain. A look at them excites the sinful curiosity in the heart of the child and robs it of the delicacy of innocence. It may, indeed, happen, that your children, boys and girls, learn by them how to get up such pictures themselves and show them to one another. — And what sort of love stories, weeklies or monthlies, do your children obtain from so-called friends, impudent agents and newsdepots? I know of certain poor widows, who every two weeks take twenty five cents, or more, from their wash earnings, and give it to their lady daughter, so that she can lay in a full supply of such poisonous stuff to read. Were parents to buy poison in the drug store and mix it with the victuals of their children, they would, if convicted, be condemned to the gallows. But where shall parents be sent to, if they are convicted before the judgment seat of God, that they have not withheld from their children, but have rather themselves purchased the secret poison, which innumerable scribes of hell have mixed with the printer's ink? — Be very strict on this point. Do not listen to your children when they try to excuse themselves by saying: "It's wholly innocent! Only a charming story! Such and such also read it."

If you yourselves are not able to judge in the case, because you do not understand the English or German trash in question, ask the advice of the priest. Thereupon do away with the poisonous reading matter! Should the boy or girl talk saucily, then, father, it is high time, that you not only show, but also apply the rod.

In after life, when your bones shall have moldered to dust, your children will thank you for having secured to them innocence, religion and piety by watching over them strictly. I once was acquainted with a poor sick widow. She was bed-ridden for a long time and suffered much, but being a truly Christian sufferer, always preserved a cheerful, happy disposition. One day I found that she was deeply cast down and excited. When I asked the cause of this, she said: "You know my only daughter that waits on me. She has always been a good and pious child. Since a few days, however, her conduct is entirely changed. For she works as little as possible, does not like to pray with me any more, neglects to wait on me, always strives to hide, and is incessantly reading day and night. In answer to all my inquiries she simply remarks dryly and saucily — 'I'm reading a charming story for amusement.' — I wish, Father, you would inquire into the matter." I called the daughter. Reluctantly she brought me a whole pile of so-called fire-side stories which she had obtained from a lady friend. I did not have to turn many leaves to convince myself of the dangerous character of their illustrations and contents. The entire lot was at once removed. This, of course, provoked quite a little stream of bitter tears, but scarcely were these dried, when the daughter again became, as heretofore, blithe and cheerful, affectionate towards her mother, industrious at work and devout at prayer. At my next visit, mother and daughter thanked me amidst tears of joy.

Finally, dear parents, *exercise close vigilance over yourselves, over all you say and do in presence of your little ones*, so that they may never see or hear from you anything that could become for them an occasion of even the smallest sin, or, even blunt the delicacy of their conscience in the least. Do not say: "Why, they are but children! They do not see nor hear, at least they do not understand!" — Remember they have delicate eyes and ears and in their little hearts they bear about with them a curiosity which is prone to sin. Therefore, I beseech, I conjure you not to be so shortsighted as many parents, alas, are in this regard. Thus there are parents, — often also adult brothers and sisters — who in the presence of innocent children, talk by the hour about love matters, courtships, marrying, even about conjugal affairs, about cases of seduction and smutty, scandalous occurrences. The children hear what is said. Could the angels guardian close the eyes and ears of the little ones, they would verily do so! Such a charge, however, they have not received from the Heavenly Father. But the parents, being the visible guardian angels, have the obligation of keeping away from the eyes and ears of their children, whatever might enter through these senses and harm their soul. This charge, this obligation, is neglected by many parents through failure of exercising that absolutely necessary vigilance over themselves, over their words and actions, and over all that surrounds their children. The deplorable consequence is, that nowadays the children of many parents know — and know but too well — at an age of from eight to ten years, what they ought

not to know before their twentieth or twentyfourth year. Nay, at such a tender age they speak already, and even do, what the angels guardian, the heavenly mother, the Divine Lover of the little ones, would have to shed tears over, were such a thing possible!

O Christian parents! Gladly and willingly receive the instructions which we priests give you in sincere love for yourselves and your children. Verily, it is no pleasure for us, to speak to you on all these matters. But St. Paul admonishes us in the words, which he addressed to his disciple Timothy, saying: "*Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke* (2. Tim. 4. 2). This exhorting, this urging is, to be sure, but love, sincere love for yourselves and your little ones. You cannot save yourselves and your soul, if your children perish through your own fault. Therefore, ever be the vigilant angels guardian of your children on the way to the abode of your Heavenly Father. For this reason, lookout in the first place and above all, that the parental home do not become a place of scandal to your children. Here above all, exercise Christian watchfulness. Otherwise it might come to pass, that the Divine Saviour who redeemed your children and committed them to your charge, should be obliged to show and convince you in the judgment following right after death, that the parental home has been the place, where your children had, as it were, laid the foundation of their moral corruption and eternal perdition. From this he desires to preserve you, and will do so if you pray to Him often and ardently! You must, however, co-operate by incessant watchfulness. Amen.

## 16. Care in Keeping the Children at Home as much as possible.

> Ecce quam bonum et iucundum, habitare fratres in unum . . . . . Quoniam illic mandavit Dominus benedictionem et vitam usque in saeculum. Ps. 132, 1-3.
>
> "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethern to dwell together in unity. . For there the Lord hath commanded blessing, and life for evermore."

Every sensible person endeavors to secure, with lock and key, his purse and goods against thieves and burglars. More precious to parents than all the money in the world, are the immortal souls of their children; and more dangerous, more numerous, more powerful, than all the thieves taken together, are the evil spirits, who seek to entrap these souls. For this reason the Heavenly Father has placed two visible guardian angels at the side of children, as the latter are too feeble and inexperienced to protect themselves against their foe. Father and mother, after they have brought the child on the way that leads to heaven by introducing it into the Christian religion, shall, by incessant *watchfulness*, keep it on this path and preserve it from deviating therefrom. We have

already seen with what this watchfulness must concern itself *at home*. Observe and study the child. By its exterior behavior learn to know its interior propensities. Thus alone can you learn to treat it in the *right manner*, to suppress its inclination for sin and hell, and to develop its disposition for heaven. Numberless and highly pernicious faults, committed in the education of children, do not arise from bad will on the part of parents, but from the fact that they do not understand their children, and, therefore, do not handle them aright. — Still, worse, nay, yet more cruel, are those parents, who wilfully deceive themselves and would recognize in their children veritable angels without fault or failing, although in the stubbornness and obstinacy, in the pride and vanity and many other faults of their offspring, they might see day by day, and could almost grasp with their hands a great number of hateful traits of character, which are not at all angelic, but just the reverse. Furthermore, watch over the children whilst they are at play, in their mutual intercourse, and in their association with the strangers you may chance to have in the house: watch the pictures and books, by means of which Satan nowadays smuggles much poisonous matter into the family: exercise vigilance over yourselves, over all you say and do in presence of the children. Through want of this watchfulness over one's self, many parents become a source of scandal to their own children. To-day let us consider:

1. The care of keeping the children at home as much as possible is a necessary precaution of watching over them; and

2. How can parents do and accomplish this?

1. In order to lighten the necessary and very grave duty of watchfulness, keep the children at home, as much and as long as possible the small ones as well as those that are grown up. The reason is obvious. As long as you have the children under your eyes, you know, see and hear what they are doing. But should they, without cause and through your own fault, be away from you for hours upon hours, you are guilty of a sin against parental vigilance. For, who guarantees to you that your child, — weak, inexperienced and thoughtless, as it is, will not fall into the hands of Satan's highway robbers, if your presence does not scare them away? Moreover, I have already shown you that the parental home is the best place for children to grow up, in health of soul and body. Whilst in the street you need not look long for dust and dirt: there you seek in vain for apples and luscious grapes. These thrive in an inclosed, well-guarded and carefully tended garden. Now the *parental home* is just such a garden for those live, little trees, which the Heavenly Father has entrusted to your care; it is the soil and the atmosphere in which your children must grow up. Wherefore, cultivate true, Christian family life. But this you can do only when you draw a charmed circle, as it were, around your children, which will hold them together with firm and yet agreeable bonds, and when you bring things to such a pass, that you would be rather with your children, than anywhere else, and that these also feel nowhere better and happier, than when they are in your company.

Oh, what a beautiful spectacle is such family life in the eyes of God, angels and men! It is a truthful copy of the life which the holy family led at Nazareth. It is so pleasing and refreshing, that you feel agreeably at home on entering into such a family. It is so beautiful and, at the same time, so necessary for the temporal and eternal welfare of the children, that we need not feel surprised, if the enemy of God's vast family on earth, and of every Christian family in particular, exerts all his battering rams to crush in the walls of such a parental home, to tear down the walls and to convert it into a dreary uninhabitable waste. And in this he succeeds, alas, only too well and too often! Are not Satan and his helpers busy tearing the Christian family to pieces? The father for instance, separated as he is already during the entire day from his children, must not be permitted to stop at home during the evening. He is drawn away in all directions by societies and meetings and amusements. And the children? Even the little ones run about the streets until late in the evening. The big ones, having returned home from work, scarcely know how to rush through their supper quickly enough in order to get away as soon as possible and to knock about in all possible places where they ought not to be. Whom do we find still at home, —in the dreary, cold home? The poor mother, as she, chilled to her very heart, anxiously hearkens till late at night, if the husband and the grown up children will not yet return, and as she sits by the cradle of her babe and thinks, amidst bitter tears, of the future, when also this her last child will

wrest itself from her arms to run into the street. What a sad, heart-rending spectacle! And what are the consequences? You behold them but too often before your very eyes, and on all sides, in the youth of the present day. Want of politeness and good manners, bold impudence, mocking of parents and old people, cursing and swearing, and a way of speaking of which a heathen would feel ashamed: unrestrained seeking after pleasure which is set up as the great purpose of life; — these are but a few feeble details of the sad picture, such as an infidel writer, in an non-Catholic newspaper, drew some time ago. And all this, he concludes, comes from the fact that our young people grow up *in the street and not at home*. I shall not examine, whether this living in the street is the only reason of the ruin of our youth. Without doubt, however, it is a very strong reason. And certain it is, that you parents have fulfilled almost one half of the great task of education, provided you succeed in keeping, as much and as long as possible, your children, big and little, at home and around you, far away from the life of the street.

"But that is not so easy" you say. I concede. And if so many parents complain that it is quite difficult in this country, and surely, also in other lands, to bring up children well, perhaps the greatest part of this difficulty lies in the fact, that here and elsewhere, children are accustomed entirely too much to spending their life in the street; the example of the majority entices also the others into the street. How often do you parents complain to

the priest: "I should like to keep the children at home, away from dangerous companions and amusements. But then they murmur and complain: Those and those children and young men and young ladies are allowed to go out always and to take in everything; but we must always stay at home!" —

To such *children*, who, owing to their worldly spirit and ignorance, murmur thus, I would say very earnestly: "Just wait until later! I know of very many adult and married people, who though their parents are dead and in their graves, are yet grateful to them for not allowing them to loaf about away from home. And I know of others, who loudly accuse their own parents, even in their graves, by saying: "You are to blame that I went astray and was ruined. Had you kept us more strictly at home, and especially at night-time, we should be just as good and just as happy as any of our own age." Do not, therefore, murmur and complain about the seeming severity of your parents. The cage in a warm room, well provided with food and drink, is, of course, a barrier to the flight of the songster, but it, also, preserves him from numerous birds of prey, from frost and inclement weather, from hunger and thirst. The walls and roof of the parental home may seem to you a little narrow and close; however, they protect you against numberless robbers and footpads, and facilitate for parents the necessary duty of watchfulness.

2. After you are firmly convinced, dear parents, that to keep the children at home, is the best precautionary measure to oversee them, you thereby

also obtain the strongest *motive* to act accordingly. Love, persistence, prayer will furnish you with the *right means*. *If the children are still small, patience*, above all, is required particulary on the part of the mother, who must bother with them the livelong day. The children when at play, raise a terrible racket, everything lies about topsy-turvy; now they break this, now another thing. What shall you do? Drive the children out of the house just to obtain a little rest? You may do this in good weather, if you have a little playground beside the house. If not, bear the noise and tumult patiently. Then you have at least the assurance, that nothing happens under your eyes which, properly speaking, would be evil or dangerous. Besides, this patience which is to be exercised daily, nay, hourly, is for you an inexhaustible source of the richest merits unto eternity. Short, frequent ejaculatory prayers to the Most Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and the Guardian Angels, will obtain strength for you to overcome all impatience.

Indeed, one would hardly believe what an abundance of merits, particularly the Christian mother can acquire and actually does acquire, without even stepping outside of the children's room. The apartment of the little ones is, as it were, the battlefield on which she gains the most beautiful laurels unto Heaven. I concede, that the noise, at times, is such as to almost take away one's power of hearing and seeing. I allow, that ever and anon she must interrupt her housework and get up, checking the little ones right and left, ordering, settling quarrels, mending playthings that

have been broken, blowing away the pain from some bruised finger and dressing the gash which threatens to begin to bleed. But only a glance directed to the Crucifix upon the wall: only a brief recollection of the words uttered by the Divine Lover of the little ones — "Suffer children to come to me and forbid them not (Luke 18. 16) — and she will let them romp and continue to play, nay, will even herself join in for a moment in order to encourage them to play, or at least will manifest some interest as though she still were a child herself. What does she gain thereby? I cannot, of course, show you the long line of golden treasures unto heaven which the Guardian Angel, pencil in hand, records in the Book of Life. However, she gains already here on earth the invaluable advantage of having her children always in view and thus preserving them effectually from every evil influence. Connected with this is the still greater utility that, even in later years yet, the children will prefer to stay with their mother and, during the period where childish sports have been displaced by the battle and storms of life, will hasten to the maternal heart, in order to seek counsel and consolation with mother. On the other hand, take another mother. She is repulsive, impatient towards the children, flares up at the least noise, at the least fault. She hates to be in the same room with the children and witness their amusements. Character and ailments have made her nervous. For this reason she forbids childish mirth, chases them outdoors, or orders them to be as quiet as a mouse. Should she be somewhat

better situated and able to keep a hired girl, she lets her bother with the children. Thus it happens that the mother scarcely sees the children in the morning and, if so, only for a hurried, exceedingly cold greeting, while at night she does not get to see them at all, for the simple reason that she returns too late from the ball or the theater, or the social meetings she is wont to attend. I ask you — is such a woman really a mother? Need she wonder if the children would rather be anywhere than with her? She does not even understand how to form a family bond between herself and her little ones — why then should she endeavor by her conduct to tear it asunder? Wherefore, Christian parents! Christian mothers! practice patience und meekness when in the midst of your little ones! These beautiful virtues, of course, should not and dare not degenerate into such weakness and indulgence as to overlook the real faults of children and let them go unpunished. No. They shall only serve to establish the mild and yet strong bond which will keep the children at home, near to and under the eyes of their parents.

If children are somewhat more grown, there are other means to check the racket; *occupy* them with the *performance of light housework*. I know of boys and girls, ranging from six to eight years, who assist at least in removing the dishes, in washing and putting them away, in sweeping the sitting room and kitchen, in carrying in wood and coal and going on little errands. Others have a small portion of the yard assigned to them and which is known as their little garden with its staked off

flower bed, or they take upon themselves the care of the doves and chickens. All this saves mother many a step and turn, trains children to a well-ordered activity, strengthens their will and preserves body and soul in health; whilst a continued playful idleness has this effect with many other children, that they grow up like so many lank bean poles, or, remain a plump mass of flesh in which the dangerous germs of sloth, sensuality and impurity are steadily increasing. To avoid this, parents who are better circumstanced and able to keep one or more hired hands for the performance of the housework, should allow their children to learn and perform such labor themselves. It is related of an imperial family, that all the princes had to learn and practice a trade; and formerly, distaffs and knitting needles were familiar and honored companions in the highest circles. Such a custom was and is not to be regarded as a mere dallying away the time, but as a powerful means of virtue, not as a disgrace, but as an honor. For, properly speaking, only a person that works, has any claim to honor. Moreover, it is also true in general of children, that *idleness is the source of all vices* and that it "*hath taught much evil*" (Ecclesiasticus, 33, 29).

Wherefore, begin to occupy your children with a little work from their early youth. To do so, is not cruelty, but sincere love. They will gladly work at home if you amonish them with kindness and do not drive them thereto admidst scolding, thundering and blows. Say in a very kind manner to the son or the daughter — "Come, help me a little.

Jesus at your age in the house of Nazareth also helped St. Joseph and His Blessed Mother at work." — Thereupon promise the children, should they perform a certain appointed work, some small reward, such as a walk out together, a visit with relatives, or, a contribution to their little savings bank. Then, as soon as its contents warrant the purchase, let them buy something useful which you should suggest. Whatever they have earned themselves, even though only apparently so, will give them greater joy than what you may buy them. Besides, in this manner you preserve and cherish in your offspring without effort and without cost a love for work and for staying at home.

*The school also affords you another opportunity to employ your little ones at home.* You must certainly allow the children when they return from school, some time for recreation. If the way home from school be pretty long, this circumstance already will contribute greatly to stretch and exercise their limbs. Soon after, if possible before supper, the necessary repetition and preparation for school must begin. I say: "necessary." For, children in their thoughtlessness, and parents in their blindness may not see, or, rather, may not want to see into this. We priests and teachers, however, know that — the difference in the progress of children who prepare for school, and of those who do not, is palpable. And just of those very children who always come to school without preparation and never have learnt even the easiest questions of Catechism, one hears only too frequently the complaint, that they romp about and grow up in the street.

***For adult children, it is still more important that the golden rule of the house be observed.*** Numberless are the cases where children, who had grown up well-behaved under the protection of school, church and family, were spoilt soon after by a life spent in the street. If you are still anxious, dear parents, to prevent and save what may yet be saved, you must earnestly and persistently carry out this principle: *First — never allow your children to go out without their asking your permission and without telling you where they are going; and, secondly—appoint a time when they are to return, and see to it that they be home at the fixed hour.* Without such a rule and without its strict and persistent enforcement, a family in the true, Christian sense, is inconceivable. The parental home, in such a case, is no longer the house of parents, but, at best only a boarding house, a place for night lodging, where thieves and robbers of souls with skeleton keys pass in or out, through window or back door, just as they please. And the entire responsibility for the moral ruin of the children, which is the usual and almost necessary consequence of such a life, falls on the conscience of parents. For, they are responsible before God for whatever the children do or omit, inasmuch as they could have furthered, or hindered it. The customary excuses: We did not know it,—did not think of it, avail no longer with grown up children and are, as a rule, thread-bare subterfuges, which come to naught before the scrutinizing eyes of the judge. You should have known and thought of it before. And if now you cannot carry out this rule any more in regard to your adult children, it

is your fault. Why did you not train your children to it early, so that they could never go out without your permission, without mentioning the place and without being back at the hour you appointed? *What a person is accustomed to in youth, he will observe when he grows older.* There are to-day yet a few families, where the children are not taught otherwise, but that they must act in keeping with this regulation. They are, as a rule, truly Christian families with well-behaved, good children.

Endeavor with all your might, parents and children, and children and parents, to be such a family. Should you then in the lapse of time, be wrested asunder, not by the wicked world, but in consequence of a change of vocation, the recollection of the family life, spent within the parental home, will accompany you through this earthly sojourn as a sweet memory, and, at the same time, be to you a sure pledge of a blissful reunion in the mansion of the Father in Heaven.

*As to the small and large children,* it is self-evident, that parents must do their utmost to *make home dear, cozy and agreeable to them.* The well-known motto and song of "Home, sweet home," has its full meaning. Parents, however, cannot buy this sweetness at the confectioner's, but must prepare it themselves and that from many ingredients.

Among these are: *Love and peace* of parents among themselves; for it is highly disagreeable to dwell where father and mother quarrel and wrangle. Then, — *a devoted looking out* for the temporal and eternal welfare of the children, and, indeed, with-

out partiality. Parents must prove by deeds to their children, that they are their best and sincerest friends. Furthermore: *Recreation in common*, pastimes, walks, little feasts. Unless this be done, children will look to the outer world for pleasures, which, but too readily, prove dangerous to them. Finally, all this must be imbued with that genuine, Christian piety, which is the mother not of sour, repulsive gloominess, but of the purest and most innocent joy of heart. A family where all this is found, must have been before the vision of the psalmist when he exclaimed: "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren (parents and children) to dwell together in unity! . . For there the Lord hath commanded blessing and life for evermore." From my whole heart I wish to you parents and children, this blessing, and, therefore, I beseech you to pray and co-operate with one another, so that you may be and remain, what the Heavenly Father has united you for, namely a truly Christian family. Amen.

## 17. Difficulties encountered in Upholding the fixed Rule of the House.

> Qui cum sapientibus graditur, sapiens erit; amicus stultorum similis efficietur. Prov. 13, 20.
>
> "He that walketh with the wise, shall be wise; a friend of fools shall become like to them."

Verily, the Guardian Angels must be greatly troubled with the difficult task of leading us frail, thoughtless, stubborn members of the human family up the steep pathway, surrounded by countless foes, back to the mansion of Our Heavenly Father. Parents, who are the visible guardian angels, have a similar burden with regard to their children. In both cases the main concern is to *guard* and *preserve* the charge from going astray, and to protect it against being seduced. The safeguarding on the part of parents, the chief duty of Christian watchfulness, consists in this, that they keep their children, little and big, as much and as long as possible, at home under their own eyes. Parents, before God, are responsible for almost everything the children do or omit; hence, it is necessary that they also know, see and hear all. This incessant vigilance which is rendered possible by fostering a truly Christian family life, is, no doubt, burden-

some to parents and maybe also irksome to children. They, however, I mean the children, are but too often like the singing bird which fain would break through the wire of the cage and fly into the open air, where hawk, storm, blizzard and hunger lie in wait to put it to an untimely sad death. In the foregoing sermon I have shown parents the necessity and the manner of removing the difficulties of watchfulness over their little ones. Be *patient* with the small, naughty faults of children; help them pass time by setting them at easy and varied house and school work; make home a dear and beloved little place for them by innocent joy and recreation and plays, by sincere care for their well-being, by peace and kindness among themselves.

Sometime ago a young married woman, who fared quite well in her new state of life, upon revisiting her parents, said with tearful eyes: "After all, there is no place more beautiful than a home with parents!"

Behold in the above the golden standard of a happy home, and see how it is to be lived up to.

Let us examine to-day two objections which might be urged against its realization.

1. *The so-called providing for by marriage.*
2. *The support which parents expect from their children.*

1. Are there really, then, objections to the domestic rule which we established? I have already told you that Satan and his abettors apply all levers to destroy the parental home and send out all kinds of decoys to draw the children away

from home. In the first place many parents say, or, if they are ashamed to say it, think at least: "But we must also draw into consideration, that our children are to be *provided for by marriage*. Therefore they must begin to cultivate *acquaintances*. At home, however, they find no occasion to do so. Under the circumstances, then, it but remains for us to allow them to go out and to enjoy whatever comes along. Otherwise we shall expose ourselves and our children to the danger of being left."

Thus we have arrived, as you see, at the chapter of very interesting acquaintanceships, I was going to say, exceedingly dangerous company-keeping, concerning which we shall have to speak yet more explicitly later on. To-day I will say only this much — For many children, especially daughters, and for many parents, more particularly mothers, it would have been much better for time and for eternity, if the daughters had never been married. Or (and I speak of real not imaginary life), is it perhaps a blessing for both parties, mother and daughter, if the latter a few weeks after her marriage, with eyes that are red from crying, or, what is worse, black and blue from a beating, comes running to her mother and laments to her: "Oh, how unhappy I am! Alas, what a husband I have had the misfortune to wed!" — Poor child! Where did you get your husband? "On the street, on an excursion, at the ball, to which my mother allowed, nay, even urged me to go for the purpose of an opportunity to get married! — O blind parents! and especially you, O cruel mother!

You have succeeded in yoking your daughter; you have provided for her marriage in a manner from which the Lord save us! Marriages, I mean happy marriages, are concluded in Heaven, and not on the street, not on the dancing floor, not on excursions, or in walking to or from the theater. In other words, parents and children must first deliberate with God, as to whether the marriage of their son or of daughter is according to the Divine Will, and if it really be the path appointed by God leading to temporal and eternal happiness. If such be the case, that is to say, if they have ascertained this after much prayer and mature deliberation, then God will also provide a suitable opportunity, on condition that they all keep on praying to Him with confidence. Time and again have I heard excellent women, who lived a very happy matrimonial life, tell me the following: "Excepting an occasional amusement, which I was allowed to enjoy in the company of my parents and under their care, I never have been at a ball, or a theater, before I got married. In this respect my parents were very strict, and I am grateful to them for it to this day. Having deliberated with myself long and prayed much, I felt that it was the will of God that I should get married. Being thus convinced, I continued quietly to pray, that God might direct and dispose all in regard to time and opportunity, as would please Himself and be to my own good. My companions, who were permitted to enjoy every amusement and began their acquaintanceship with a view to matrimony amidst balls, and dances, got married lightheartedly at an early age, and

pitied me, that I seemed to be left. My pious mother said to me — "Continue to pray and I will also do so. God will provide." And God did provide; He made a choice for me. I was just performing, in the interest of my future lot, the devotion of the Six Sundays in honor of St. Aloysius, when he made me acquainted with a certain party who was known and proved to be a very righteous and well-behaved Christian young man. After a short innocent courtship, I contracted marriage with him, which has evidently been blessed by God, for it proved to be a very happy one." — Be, therefore, firmly convinced that God loves domestic life which keeps parents and children closely and as long as possible together, and that He will bless your children precisely by leading them into a happy family life. On the contrary, it may happen, that a chance, which just presents itself after being hunted up amidst reckless roving about, away from home, on all kinds of perilous paths, — and that the consequent sensual impression, excited on the spur of the moment, may move and urge one into entering the state of matrimony. The result, however, is a marriage, such as is found nowadays but too often, viz. a matrimonial union, in which the married folks, especially the women, shed tears in greater quantity than the water they drink. Wherefore, Christian parents, abide by the golden rule of the house, also in dealing with the children who are grown up and of marriageable age. Do not allow them to go out without permission, and without requiring them to tell you where they are going, and without

appointing a fixed time when they must return. And as for you, sons and daughters, help to make easy for your parents the enforcement of this rule, by yielding a ready submission. Thus both parties will avoid much trouble and insure to themselves abundant blessings.

2. *Another excuse* for not observing the golden rule of a well-ordered household, one often gets to hear from aged, helpless and less comfortably circumstanced parents. "How gladly," they say, "would we keep our adult sons and daughters at home! Often enough do we tell them to stay at home, or to return at a seasonable hour. Notwithstanding, they knock about, we do not know where, during half and sometimes throughout the whole night. We dare not treat them with greater strictness or severity; otherwise they will forsake us, and thus we shall lose the money which they pay us for their board, and which we need for a living! Here again I touch upon the sorest and most detestable spot of Christian family life, which is becoming more and more common, alas, everywhere, in smaller, as well as in larger towns. Parents are no longer parents, clothed with parental authority, but common boarding house keepers; the children are no more children and members of one common family, but merely self-seeking boarders. When it has come to this, I can, then, of course, understand how the aged father, who is no longer able to work, and the poor old feeble mother, broken with care and anxiety, are often obliged to overlook more than what they should. But if things get too bad, if

the son, the daughter stray about during half or the entire night, if to this they add, as is generally the case, obstinacy, impudence and omission of the most necessary religious duties, of Mass on Sunday, of Confession and Communion: then, Christian parents, it is time to call to the ungovernable child, "Either you will put an end to your loafing about, or, clear out of my house. I cannot and will not allow your sinful life to draw the curse and the thunderbolts of Divine Justice upon myself and the family." Having spoken thus, also *act* accordingly. Probably you have already threatened a hundred times, "I'll chase you away from home, if you do not become better." Your children laugh at your threats, as they know, from experience, that you do not seriously mean it, and, in addition, even make fun of you. Carry out what you deem necessary, so that you may not participate in the sins of your children.

"But then," you object, "people will denounce us as being cruel, unnatural parents, and we ourselves fear lest the children will then be lost entirely." In this case I advise you to speak to the priest, who is acquainted with yourselves, your children and circumstances, and then do whatever he shall tell you. Do not mind the gossip of the people. You are accountable not to the world but to God, as to how you treat your children. As regards the future of such children, it is certain, if not always, at least in many instances, that they can hardly become worse than what they are, even though they should go away from home entirely.—Just let them eat their bread for a time among

strangers; let them taste and feel how fickle the world is, and, meanwhile, redouble your prayers to God for their conversion. Possibly, they will thus come to a better sense much sooner, than if you were to support their sinful behavior by a false indulgence, nay, by, an unmerited and ill requited tenderness. As long as children, chiefly adult sons, who are spoilt, know, that they will be again received at home by the too indulgent parents and obtain all necessaries of life, they usually continue to live in idle sloth, or, to squander their wages. However, should they forfeit the support from the parental home, by the fact that you do not tolerate any longer their sinful conduct, it may be, that necessity will teach them to pray and to reform their evil ways. This may, and is rather likely to come to pass, especially, if you yourselves pray the more ardently for such a prodigal son who is knocking about among strangers. The prayer sent up by pious parents in such a case to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Sorrowful Mother possesses an exceedingly great power. I have been acquainted with parents, especially righteous widows, whose heart was almost broken by the departure from home of some disorderly son. They suffered and prayed, as it were, day and night. After a short while they shed tears of joy. For, the son who had been lost, returned to them converted and reformed.

When you are compelled to have recourse to this resort, namely separation, do not fear and say, "What shall become of us in our helplessness? If you must suffer want, bear it as penance for, the

many faults which you have committed in the earlier training of your children, and put your confidence in Him who feedeth even the birds of the air.

The three children — a son and two daughters — belonging to a certain family in Westphalia, had grown up in piety and the fear of God and continued good and well-behaved under the constant observance of the golden rule of the house. One day, however, it so happened that the father died. During the first few weeks after his death, all passed off well, as heretofore. When the children desired to go out, they asked the permission of their mother, a feeble little woman, and returned home at the appointed hour. Very soon, however, it was observed, that the eye and hand of the father were no more. The children began to go out oftener and to stay out whenever and as long as they pleased. The mother, strange to say, did not scold and raise a disturbance, but grew only more serious and reticent than ever. She prayed, suffered and reflected. One evening, the three children had gone out again without permission, and returned very late during the night. The mother had kept the supper warm, set it before them without saying a word, and thereafter betook herself to rest, or, rather to prayer. Next morning whilst her three children were sleeping off the exertions and fatigue of their amusements, the mother was up and busy preparing the breakfast, after which she called the children and quietly invited them to table. When they had finished she placed before each child a bundle, containing the most necessary

pieces of clothing, a purse with some money, and uttered these significant words: "Here you have whatever you need for the time being. Now get out of this house. Your sainted father and I do not wish that your disobedience and your roaming about at night-time should draw down God's curse upon this home, which, up to within recently had been a happy one." The children understood their mother. They knew that she really meant and would carry out whatever she threatened after mature reflection. It seemed to them as though scales had dropped from their eyes. All three fell upon their knees before their mother, asking her forgiveness amid tears, and promising most earnestly, that they would nevermore cause her any trouble. The mother also understood her children. She realized the earnestness of their promise and said mildly and quietly: "Well, I will forgive you all. You shall stay with me as my children and lighten and sweeten the burden of my old age. But remember one thing — the golden house rule which your father, God rest him, has established and always enforced, shall be observed also as long as my eyes are open. No child shall go out without my permission, or without clearly stating as to where it is going, and without being back at the hour which I shall fix. Only in this manner can I bear the responsibility which I owe to God for your conduct. In remembrance of this hour, and as a serious reminder, I shall keep these three bundles in my room. Should any one of you fail to fulfil the promise given, your bundle is ready! On the spot you must leave the house!" This was a good mother.

If we had many more such mothers and, at their side, fathers similar to them, we should have fewer young men and young women who have been ruined by a life in the street, by dancing and theater-going and other dangerous amusements. The principal blame of this steadily increasing and wide-spread ruin, is to be placed on the shoulders and conscience of the parents. You may lament and say, — "We have sent our children to church and school; formerly they, too, have been good; later on they were spoilt through bad companionship!" But just look around a little. If envy does not blind you, you will always still find a few families with well-behaved children. Yet you will always find, that the parents of these children and of these young men and young ladies, do not permit them to run about the streets wantonly, indulge as they please in every kind of amusement, go with every body that happens along, but you will find that they keep them nicely at home. Why then did not *you* preserve your children from evil companionship? It was your duty, you were obliged to do so. In order to carry out also actually what you are bound to do, the Heavenly Father gives you the right understanding, the necessary strength and endurance, provided you ask Him for this grace urgently and perseveringly. But I fear there are very many parents who scarcely ever in their life, and then only hurriedly, raise their hands to Heaven and pray: "Heavenly Father, Jesus, Mary, enlighten and strengthen us that we may bring up our children well!" No wonder, then, that they do not fulfil and perform, like so many

other duties of Christian education, especially that of watchfulness over their children. Wherefore, pray and work and watch, and that beginning with the first days of their infancy. Then you will succeed, because God watches with you. Then you are truly Christian parents, true-hearted shepherds, who keep together in the fold of the parental house the tender little lambs, entrusted to your care, and thus preserve them from the jaws and the claws of the wolves that lie in wait for them on all sides. Amen.

## 18. Watchfulness out of the House. Association and Employment of Children.

Quos dedisti mihi, non perdidi ex eis quemquam. Io. 18, 9.

"Of them whom thou hast given me, I have not lost anyone."

The observance of the golden rule of the house and the upholding of Christian family life are indispensably necessary for the successful education of children, whether little or big. If we have, or perhaps I should rather say, if we always had, fathers and mothers who understand how to keep up a Christian family life, the education of children were an assured fact, and bad children, bad young men and young women would be only rare exceptions. Precisely because the family is so often dismembered; because father or mother, or perhaps both, from ignorance or a worldly spirit, do not understand, or, somehow or other, do not succeed in keeping their children together at home by the charm of the family circle, — all the cares and exertions are so frequently counteracted and rendered futile, which church and school and priests and teachers devote to the education of children and the safeguarding of youth. In this lack of Christian family life, in this neglect of

Christian surveillance over the children, lies, doubtless, the greatest responsibility of parents. On the day of judgment God shall say to them: "Your children are more my little ones than your own. I have placed you as visible guardians at their side. From your hands I shall again demand them. Even though only one of them should have gone astray and been lost, because you have either not at all, or only badly fulfilled your office as guardian, I cannot have any mercy with you."

Wherefore, Christian parents, take it seriously, as to watching over your children and enforcing the golden rule of the house, so that you will never allow them to go out without express permission and a definite statement as to where and to whom they are going, and that they must be home at the time which you appoint.

As you see, no body asks you to hedge in your house with a sky-scraping enclosure, so as to shut off your children completely from the outside world. To do so, were unreasonable. Your children must go into the world, into the midst of jostling life. Here, however, you are the God-appointed guardians, and, therefore, responsible for all they do. But this duty you cannot fulfil, unless you are able to give definite answer to the question — whither, to whom and with whom are my children wont to go.

From a motive of charity for yourselves and your children, let me draw your attention to-day to two points:

1. With whom do your children usually associate when they are out of the house?
2. Where do they work?

1. See to it that your children associate as little as possible, or better do not associate at all with children who *profess a different creed*, or *no religion at all*. Such association, usually, is formed very easily. The *nearest neighbors* perhaps are Lutherans, Methodists or infidels. Others, maybe, are even *related* to you: they are your fallen away brothers and sisters. This shocking apostasy from the Church, begun and inherited, as it were, through mixed marriages, has brought things to such a pass in larger communities, that one but rarely finds families, where all the members of the first and second generation still firmly adhere to the faith. This is a very, very sad state of affairs and deplorable even unto tears!

Now such fallen away relatives and neighbors also have children. "These," as you often remark among yourselves and probably also say so to the priest, "are very neat, handsome, wide awake and outwardly well brought up. Therefore, surely, our children may associate with them, — the little ones for the purpose of playing with one another as children and for pastime, and the larger ones for the sake of youthful companionship. Did we not allow this, we should fail, indeed, in that charity, which is due our neighbors and relatives. We should be decried as intolerant cranks, and this censure and abuse would then fall upon the Catholic religion and the Church at large!"

Christian parents! In his letter to *Titus* (3, 10), whom he had consecrated bishop, St. Paul exhorts: "*A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid, knowing that he is subverted.*" Such

is the rule of conduct given to a *bishop*, who even has the obligation to go after the strayed souls, and, therefore, certainly also possesses the grace not to imperil his own soul through intercourse with them. Is it not temerity, then, if Catholic parents imagine that an intimate association with heretics and infidels will not be harmful to themselves, and, still less, to their children, who are so easily impressed and yet far from being firmly established in their faith? Or, is St. Paul perhaps too strict?

John, the Disciple of Love, repeatedly comprises the entire Law, the whole religion of Christ in the commandment of love. Now, *he* says in the first chapter of his second epistle (v. 9—10): "*Whoever revolteth and continueth not in the doctrine of Christ* (*and this is precisely what heretics and fallen away Catholics do*) *hath not God . . . . . If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house, nor say to him: God speed you. For he that greeteth him, communicateth with his wicked works.*"

Do not misunderstand these words. You shall not hate heretics, backsliders and your erring relations. On the contrary, you must love them sincerely, therefore also assist them if necessary, for instance in sickness or other distress, and, what is best of all, pray for them. I fully realize also, that in view of the sad jumble and confusion which heresy and infidelity have brought into human society at the present day, you cannot give up or avoid every social and, still less, every commercial intercourse with such people. But should

you tear down all, even the most necessary safeguards against such communication, you cannot do so without endangering your own, as well as your children's faith most vitally. Whence comes that great number of withered, cold, frigid Catholics, men and women, especially younger ones? There is a proverb which says, *Tell me with whom you associate, and I'll tell you who you are.* How often do aged parents with a broken heart complain, — My sons and daughters were very good children and devoted to the Church until they reached their fourteenth or sixteenth year. The boys have served at the Altar from early youth up and received many pictures and rewards from the priest. But then they entered into friendly, social or commercial relations with heretics, infidels and backsliders and now they have themselves suffered bankruptcy in their faith! — But from whom shall the Judge demand these children who are fallen away? — From parents who failed to prevent at the very outset and with all their might such a companionship which proved the proximate cause of their children's apostasy. And by the way, it may be stated right here, that such companionship is the usual road, too, that leads to *mixed marriages*, which, when once entered into, have nothing else to do, but to kill off and bury faith entirely after it has become so consumptive and enfeebled. For months and years the blinded parents may look on how their daughter associates at home, as well as in all places abroad, with the non-Catholic, irreligious young man. But, "he is, you know, such a nice fellow, doesn't drink, doesn't gamble, is polite,

industrious, saving and can get along in life so well." Perhaps now and then parents venture to remark to the daughter in a half-hearted way — You may go with him, but you cannot get married to him. — And still she gets married to him! The many entreaties and lamentations, all the weeping and the threats on the part of parents, now come too late. Even the priest, the father confessor, who all along was kept in the dark as to the mixed company-keeping, often continued for a long period, is now unable to help any more. The girl will simply not give up her fellow. Owing to her blind, sensual passion, fostered by the companionship which the parents permitted, she is drawn into a mixed marriage. Not seldom she is so destitute of the sense of seeing and so obdurate, as to care no more for her Catholic religion and to suffer herself to be led astray by closing this contract for life before a civil magistrate or even in presence of a preacher.

Such a miss once said to me: "If my parents did not want me to get married to the non-Catholic young man, they ought to have told me so right in the beginning, and to have forbidden all fellowship with him; then I would have heeded their wish and command. However, they did not say a word against it, but quietly permitted my companionship with him, nay, even encouraged it, so that I thought they were entirely in favor of the marriage. Now I cannot step back any more."

And the parents? They stand at the brink of the deep well, left open by themselves, and into which the thoughtless girl cast herself before their

very eyes. They stand before the raging fire which they themselves have enkindled and fed. To snatch the daughter from out of it and to quench its flames with a few tears, is beyond possibility. And the spiritual death of the daughter, as also that of her children, the recording angel writes down to the account which is to be answered for one day by the parents. Wherefore, if your soul is worth anything to you, guard your children from an intimate intercourse with companions who are not thoroughly Catholic, or who do not spring from a good Catholic stock. You must begin to observe this precaution already with the *little ones*. Otherwise there shall penetrate into the tender heart of the child a poisonous worm which, sooner or later, will consume the innermost marrow of the root of faith. By this venomous worm we understand *indifferentism*, or that *unconcern in matters of faith*, — that totally false view, so often condemned by the Church, namely, that it matters not to what religion one belongs. It amounts to the same thing, whether you are Catholic or not. "My cousins and neighbors," the ten or eleven year old boy or girl says, "do not know anything of religion — are not even baptized. For all that, they are my dearest friends and companions. The only thing I dislike, is, they always tease me, because I still pray, and go to church and even go to confession to the priest, who, after all, is also liable to sin and, therefore, say they, cannot forgive sins. I think I'll give it all up and become like them,"

Lo and behold, O parents, some of the evil effects of being too indulgent towards your chil-

dren in the matter of holding habitual intercourse with non-Catholics! It may be possible, nay, even probable, that for the time being they will conceal these effects from your eyes. It is also possible that you, or rather the Church and school, will succeed in still suppressing these germs for a while, and thus prevent them from shooting up into stalks immediately. But just wait a few short years after First Communion! Then you will see into it and lament and wail: "Our children once were Catholic, but are so no longer." Then, however, you must also add: "We are to blame for that, because we did not watch over their association with children without religion. Wherefore, be earnest and watchful!

2. The same precaution is necessary, when there is question of sending the children to earn wages during the years immediately after First Holy Communion. I am well aware that you live in the world and, therefore, you must struggle and take pains to get on in the world. True, the grown up children should endeavor to lighten for their parents all toil and labor. During the years of childhood, they have been the source of much expense to their parents. It is but meet and just that they now invest their own labor to help in assisting the common cause of the family. But then, dear parents, should you really have to send the boy or the girl to work, to earn wages, do reflect on the matter maturely beforehand, as to whom you would send them.

There are, for instance, the boys; I mention affairs as they usually occur in cities. Immediately during the first days after First Holy Communion,

they run up and down the streets to look for a job. After the boy has thus worn out the soles of a pair of shoes, he returns home one evening with a face beaming with gladness and exclaims: "Now I've got a job. To-morrow or next Monday I'm going to work. At first I shall earn one dollar per week, but soon more." If the parents inquire: "But where is your shop located?" — the boy replies — "Oh, on that and that street, far out on the east or the west side of the city." But do parents perhaps then also say: "My child, I am so anxious about your soul's salvation. First I must inquire, as to whether you are not exposed there to any danger of seduction?" — This question, however, only too often does not occur to their mind at all. The one or two dollars, they think, just come in handy. "Go then! But behave yourself so that you do not get the bounce again." And the boy goes into a den of murderers and robbers. In the shop where he is employed, smutty conversations are wont to flit through the air like poisonous mosquitoes above a filthy pool. There fallen-off Catholics, in order to stifle their conscience entirely, seek to outdo even infidels and heretics in sneering and mocking at religion and the Church, at confession and abstinence and all that is holy and divine. Lads, who worked there already for a time and who early matured in sin and vice, under the pretext of friendship, cling to your boy like so many burs and do not rest, until he has become like to them in sauciness and disobedience, in swearing and cursing, in the smuttiest words and works of darkness, nay, until perhaps he has even become worse

than they themselves. Oh, poor boy! A few months previously, — holding your lighted candle in the hand and standing at the foot of the altar, you vowed in the presence of the whole congregation, yea, of the heavenly hosts: "*I renounce Satan, his pomps, his works!*" — But what are you doing, how are you behaving now? Who is responsible for this awful change in your conduct? And the boy replies, and one day shall answer in judgment: "My parents, who for one or two dollars per week, permitted me to go to that den of the devil. Pagans in Asia or Africa cast their children upon the street, or sell them for a mere trifle to cruel slave dealers. And Catholic parents, in the midst of civilized modern paganism, sell the soul of their children for a few dollars, by permitting them to go to work in such nurseries of sin and seduction. — Here is a girl, for instance, that soon after her First Communion undertakes somewhere easy house work, let us say, the care of children. But now the poor girl, not to mention Sunday school at all, does not get to Mass on Sundays for months, nor to Confession, nor to Communion. Did parents not think of this at all when hiring the child out? Did they reserve nothing, make no limitation or exception? — None. If the girl only delivers every week or fortnight the few cents to them at home, all is well and it is praised as being a good child. "We should prefer, certainly," parents sometimes say to quiet their conscience, "if our daughter would fulfil regularly also her religious duties. But her mistress will not allow it. The fault, therefore, is not with us." — And thus they

sell the soul of their child, as well as their own, for a few paltry shillings!

And now you, Christian parents, you, who, I hope, still possess understanding and good will, and, therefore, are yet truly Christian parents, I beseech and conjure, to watch over your children. If you must allow them to associate with other people outside of your family, do not permit them to cultivate long or intimate relations with heretics, infidels and fallen-off Catholics. Such people, in a certain sense, are afflicted with the plague, with the leprosy of the soul, and will surely infect your children. Should you be obliged to send them out to work, then first reflect, examine, and inquire as to where you are about to send them. It will be best, if you pray beforehand, and that, too, with your children; for instance, by making a little novena, so that the Heavenly Father and Jesus, the best friend of your children, may provide a house, an employment, an opportunity of some kind, so that your sons and daughters can work themselves up in life without thereby exposing their eternal salvation to certain peril. Then only can you rest quiet. Then only can you say in reply to the judge when he inquires after your children: "Lord, not one of them has perished through my fault or through lack of vigilance on my part. I have worked, I have watched, I have prayed to the best of my ability." Amen.

## 19. Parties and Theater.

Quos dedisti mihi, non perdidi ex eis quemquam. Io. 18, 9.

"Of them whom thou hast given me, I have not lost anyone."

It is the indispensable duty of parents to keep away from their children, by constant watchfulness, whatever might endanger religion and piety and the salvation of their immortal souls. Therefore, you must be on the lookout, as we have seen in the foregoing sermon, that your children do not cultivate an intimate acquaintance with *heretical*, *unbelieving*, and *fallen away neighbors or relatives*. The necessary consequence of such intercourse will be, that your children will become indifferent in matters of religion. This indifference is the awful quagmire into which Satan, especially nowadays, seeks to entice Catholics. Should he succeed in this, they are almost hopelessly lost. Slowly and imperceptibly they will continue to sink deeper until they fall through the bog into the eternal abyss below. —

Moreover, you must look out lest your children be exposed to a proximate occasion of seduction in those places where you send them to work or permit them to go. In case you do not take such precaution, you barter away their immortal souls

for a few pieces of silver, and these pieces of silver, remember, will make neither you nor your children rich or happy. For, the drops of blood, with which Jesus purchased the salvation of your children, adhere to them and cry to God for vengeance.

These are serious and very momentous reflections. It is, however, also a very serious affair to be father and mother and to have received children from God.

Let us now proceed further and consider attentively a few other dark points, which parents must look to and, if possible, remove, or at least, render harmless, if they do not wish them to develop into perilous hailstorms and cyclones, figuratively speaking. For the present, we may understand by these

1. So-called parties or surprise parties;
2. The theater.

1. No reasonable person can have any objection, if relatives, neighbors, friends invite one another now and then to attend a dinner or a supper followed by a little social entertainment. If this does not occur too often and not beyond what the family is able to afford financially; if everything, also the games of the smaller and larger children indulged in on an occasion of this kind, is conducted under the eyes of the parents; if it does not last until a late hour of the night so that there is still sufficient time left to perform the regular night-prayers at home and to obtain the required sleep for the impending day's work, then such gatherings are innocent recreations, which the Heavenly Father gladly allows his children as a sort of oasis of

respite in the desert of toils and anxieties of terrestrial life. Quite different, however, is the case with so-called surprise parties, which after all, are not the surprise their name would indicate, but are only pretended to be kept "awfully secret." Every body knows of them, and they are usually held with the full knowledge and co-operation of the parents for their smaller or larger children, especially the *daughters*, and then, too, for the most part in honor of their *birthday!* Here, then, the boys and girls of fourteen and upwards meet. The parents of those who have been invited, as a rule, are not present. Now, this is the first defect, and that, too, a serious one. The master of the house finds no place in the midst of the young people and may withdraw into some remote corner. The wife and mother of the house must toil in the kitchen and may find a very sad compensation in thinking of what great honor has come to her daughter, and what capital opportunity she has now found at last of forming an acquaintance with this or that young man, whom she herself already had selected as her future son-in-law.

Thus the young people now celebrate among themselves — *what?* — *Their birthday!* But how did the soul of the boy or girl, who now receives congratulations and, maybe, also presents, look on the day of birth? Black as night, an enemy of God, shackled like an abject slave in the fetters of sin by Satan! Now, is this event of a nature that it should be celebrated with merry-making, instead of humiliating oneself before God and mourning over the abyss of human misery? "But this", you may

think, "is such an old-fashioned sentiment on my part." To swim against the stream is not so easy. The custom to celebrate the birthday of children instead of their name-day, which ought to remind them of the great blessing of Holy Baptism, has already become too wide-spread. I am even willing to concede, yea, to say emphatically, that the day of birth puts us in mind, not only of the misery of original sin, but also of the natural benefit of earthly life, which is the first condition and foundation of all subsequent blessings of God. I merely ask — In view of these frequent surprise parties, what is to be thought of the excuse of so many parents and children who say, "*There is no harm done by them?*"

I will admit, one does not see or hear any mortal sins manifested there exteriorly in action or word. Everything passes off smoothly and evenly. The newspaper account published in the column for local events, or, at least, the report circulated as the latest news, substantially always runs something like this: "They spent a most delightful time together and enjoyed themselves exceedingly." Yet should I ask the Guardian Angels, the Mother of God, Our dear Saviour, who as invisible witnesses see and hear whatever goes on in the innermost recess of the heart, — would they also agree that no evil happened there, nothing that displeased them and was harmful to these young souls? Is it, then, not an evil, is it not a sin of omission, is it not a loss of many graces and merits if these young men and young ladies do not perform their night prayers on that day? No evil, if they carry

on games and plays for the most part alone, without strict surveillance, until late at night, nay, even into the small hours of the morning — plays, which, to say the least, cannot fail to wound the tender delicacy of virginal modesty? No evil, if these young heads and hearts are stuffed so full with worldliness, sensuality, pride, vanity, with sentiments of love-sickness, of premature, and therefore highly dangerous company keeping, that the germs of childlike piety and love of Jesus and Mary are soon choked beneath the heap of so many noxious weeds? No evil, if non-Catholic neighbors have reason to be scandalized by the racket which Catholic young men and young damsels continue to make throughout the night until an early hour next morning? No evil, if during the escort on the way home every kind of misbehavior is indulged in, which cannot brook the light of day?

O parents and children! Mortal sin is the greatest evil, and next to mortal sin, there is none greater than venial sin. At the same time it is often very, very difficult to determine the boundary line between grievous and venial sins, especially in the matter of chastity. Think well on this, and you will not excuse yourselves so readily by saying: "No evil is done there!" You, parents, have the sacred duty to watch over your children, so that they may bear the white robe of baptismal innocence *unsullied* before the tribunal of Christ. It is by no means enough, if you merely look out and watch that their mortal foe may not rob the white robe entirely and wrap their souls instead in the filthy rags of grievous sin. Yours should

be children who have a wholly clean, stainless heart, children who possess a genuine, cordial piety; children from whose eyes there beams a heaven of pure love of God and holy innocence. But they are not and never will be such children as long as you allow and, indeed, even lend your aid, so that they, boys and girls, can promiscuously and without sufficient surveillance on your part, hold such parties or attend them until late at night, even later than it would become adults and older people. Wherefore, parents, stand firm, should your children, especially your daughter, ply you with stubborn persistency, saying: "We, too, ought to hold a surprise party. So and so also had one. If we do not give one, people will call us stingy and queer." Let such and similar empty talk fall on your ears unheeded, as though you were deaf. For the sake of the girl, however, you may also add: "Do be once well-behaved, modest, industrious, humble, obedient, so that you will not give us the least occasion for anxiety and complaint, and we shall buy you something good and useful for your name-day. It shall cost at least as much as the party would come to. At the same time, it shall remind you of the heavenly gifts and graces which you have received in baptism and which you can increase day by day through the intercession of your holy patron saint."

Yet, should you, my dear friends, judge at any time, — whether you do so with reason or not I will not decide — that you cannot get along at all without holding such a surprise party, then as Christian parents take at least the necessary

precautions, suggested by Christian prudence. Your personal presence and supervision, above all, shall and must give you the moral assurance that whatever might prove an occasion of sin to your children before, during and after the party has been kept away carefully. Only in this wise, not by uttering vague excuses, can you quiet your conscience.

2. Another dark, danger-laden object is the theater. It is said that some parents, especially mothers, take their children to the theater even before they have made their First Communion. Thereafter the boys and girls go with or without the knowledge and consent of their parents as often as they can scrape together, by hook or crook, the few cents of admission. (By the way, when a collection is taken up in church these young bloods who constantly run to the theater, have nothing to give or, at most, only a forlorn penny. They must lay up, of course, for the theater!) And in the theater, you know, it is so charming! Rapturous music! Brilliant scenery! Gorgeous, fascinating costumes, especially those of the heroines and ballet dancers! On the stage action of absorbing interest! There one is transported into an entirely different realm and removed, at least for a few hours, from the drudgery of every-day life! Such a recreation, certainly, is innocent, and, indeed, necessary to acquire a fine education in the affairs of life. Of sin or a danger to sin there can be no thought! That is only in the imagination of morose priests who begrudge sprightly youth every pleasure!

Christian friends and parents! The pulpit which you see here is the pulpit of Jesus Christ. We priests preach Christ and Him crucified. And we preach Him to you Christians, that is to human beings, who by the holy vows of Baptism and First Communion, have solemnly bound themselves to fight against Anti-Christ and the world. The theater, however, is but too often the pulpit of Anti-Christ. He preaches there evening after evening on the old subject: Concupiscence of the eyes, concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life. These are detestable, hideous, dangerous subjects, especially for a Christian who has abjured them solemnly. But the devil is sly. He seeks to cover up and hide all this loathsomeness and lurking danger under the splendor and tinsel of the theater. He does not preach vice, especially that of the flesh, openly and straight forward. In most of the theatrical pieces as they pass over the boards of the stage nowadays, the various vices, down to adultery, are no longer vices, but, at worst, only human weaknesses, which, by word and action of the players, become quite innocent, nay, in the end even triumph as heroic deeds, and are applauded as though they deserved honor and glory among mankind. The opposites of these vices, viz. religion, piety, innocence, are caricatured in most dramas and misrepresented covertly and by degrees. The characters who impersonate these virtuous roles, in the course of the play, are made to betray a vast deal of stupidity, hypocrisy, dishonesty — exceedingly repulsive faults, which they seek to hide beneath a very transparent cover of

religion and piety. The object is attained, vice shines in dazzling colors, and virtue is made a butt of ridicule and contempt.

Now all this our young visitors to the theater see and hear. At the same time, half intoxicated with the whole performance through its singsong and dance, they become dazed and stupefied. Reason and will are lulled asleep. The imagination alone, and, indeed, the extremely dangerous, low, sensual part of this imaginative faculty is aroused, excited, intensified. In it are deeply fixed the impressions gained during the theatrical performance. The sermon of Satan at the theater has its effect. After the entertainment and during the following days and nights the boy or girl dreams of nothing but the theater. They recall the various scenes, listen with voluptuous pleasure to the fiery declarations of love on the part of the silly, infatuated couple, of the disguised adulterers, admire the trickery and cunning which lead them through so many difficulties to the accomplishment of their sinful passion. And again and again they exclaim in that state of half wakefulness and half sleep, into which the devil lulled them at the theater and in which he holds them captive for days and weeks: "Oh but that was lovely, charming, heavenly! After all, what priests and the catechism call sinful, is not so bad, so hideous, so dangerous. And as for virtue and innocence — well, we have seen it with our own eyes, they have played a really wretched part. They are not for us. We will arrange our conduct and behavior in keeping with

what we have seen and admired so much in our favorite heroes at the theater." — And they begin to carry on accordingly. The boys and girls have become precocious by means of the theater. Sentiments of childlike piety and tender innocence, have been killed as if by a poisonous mildew. They carry out in every-day life the injunctions of the Evil One as given them in the sermon at the theater. All their thoughts and aspirations are absorbed by a secret, dangerous love affair. They play theater with their hearts and continue to play theater until they are landed in one or other theater-like marriage; they play theater, which means mockery and insult to innocence and religion; theater until the curtain falls. But then, by the latter is not to be understood the brilliantly decorated curtain, which, at the city theater, must hide from the eyes of the world the oft-times bottomless misery of the company that plays on the stage, whilst the audience staggers home as if half-inebriated amid the strains of a sensuous music. It is the curtain, black as night, which the awful hand of death withdraws suddenly to transport the soul from the theater-like stage of this world directly before the tribunal of God. Christian young men and maidens! Would you be prepared, — would you not fear to be summoned from the theater before the judgment seat of Christ? Yet, who guarantees you that this will not happen? Oh, think of the golden maxim: "Do not in life, what you will not wish to have done at the hour of death." And you, Christian parents, would you like to see it, if they were to bring your son or daughter dead

to your house in the depth of night at twelve or one o'clock, and if on the following day it should be reported throughout town that the son, the daughter of so and so died suddenly last night at the theater? And it was even Advent or Lent, during which time the Church forbids her children by a special law to take part in all public amusements!

Oh parents, be on your guard! Keep your children away from all dangerous occasions into which Satan, and the world, his servant, seek to entice them. Do not mind what others are doing, nor listen to the unreasonable importunity of your children. Remember well, that one of your chief obligations is watchfulness, by which you are to hold your children aloof from the perils of the world. Only after you have fulfilled this duty, can you one day in that solemn moment when your children are standing around your deathbed, console yourselves with the thought and words: "Of them whom Thou hast given me I have not lost anyone." Amen.

## 20. Dances.

Quos dedisti mihi, non perdidi ex eis quęmquam. Io. 18, 9.

"Of them whom thou hast given me, I have not lost anyone."

Countless are the dangerous occasions by which the world, that most faithful accomplice of Satan, seeks to draw us earthly pilgrims away from the straight path of heaven to the byways of sin and perdition. This scheme, above all, is pursued by the world with reference to children and youth in general. Ruined children, ruined young men and women, are what Satan and the world prize highest, because they cause the greatest pang to the heart of the Heavenly Father and to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. The enemies of salvation expect of them and, alas! with a certainty which seems but too well founded, that they will not depart, not even in old age, from the ways of sin and iniquity to which they have allowed themselves to be drawn at the early period of childhood and youth. What these children and young people are wanting in, is knowledge and experience. Without suspecting any danger they permit themselves to be carried away by outward impressions, and, thinking that whatever pleases and flatters the senses, is also good and wholesome, they are but too readily

deceived and led astray. In this case, who can or who shall help? The invisible Angel Guardian, certainly, does not fail to perform his duty. But his exhorting and warning voice is only too easily and too often drowned amid the din of every-day life and the loud, alluring call of the world. The young man, the maiden in the midst of the din and tumult of a pleasure-seeking world may be compared to a deaf person, a blind man who approaches perilously near to the whir of revolving wheels in the factory or who is walking in the midst of the track in front of a thundering train. Parents, — the visible guardian angels—must come to their help. And it is not enough that they merely admonish their children, little and big, by saying, 'Do not go to this place or that place, for danger threatens you there'; they must hold them back actually and with effective authority from the perils that are imminent.

As such dangers I have instanced and discussed in my last sermons—intercourse with infidel, heretical and irreligious persons, workshops and houses, where you send your children for employment; so-called surprise parties, given and celebrated, for the most part, on the birth-days of children; theaters, such as they commonly are at the present day. As you see, these all are questions which the priest does not like to treat of. Yet he must do so from a motive of love for you and your children. For, wheresoever danger threatens these young souls, the saying obtains: "*Let him save, that can save.*" In this connection there holds good the word which God spoke to the prophet: "*Cry, cease not, lift up they voice like a trumpet*" (Isaias, 58, 1). Let

me address in this spirit of kindness and love a few words to you to-day on the *subject of dancing.*

I am aware, of course, that it is well nigh lost labor to sermonize against dances. People simply will not accept any counter reasons, nor even merely listen to them, and, thus where the will is wanting, there is simply no remedy possible. Nor do I go so far as to assert, that all dances are sinful *per se.* For, even Holy Scripture tells us of a sacred dance. Namely, when king David brought back the Ark of the Covenant from the house of Obededom in solemn procession to the city of Sion, it is narrated of him: Saltabat totis viribus ante Dominum — *he danced with all his might before the Lord* (2. Kings, 6, 14). That is to say, the sentiment of joy and gratitude, which filled his heart on account of the deliverance of the Ark out of the hands of the Philistines, was so intense, that he expressed it, not merely by singing joyful songs of praise, but also by skipping merrily before the Ark with an attractive rhythmical movement of the body. The joyful movement was expressive of the holy, overflowing gladness that animated his heart. I doubt very much, if our young men and young ladies ever get into such a holy frame of mind, that they begin to dance in consequence, and that also, "*before the Lord.*" Should they, however, feel convinced that they simply cannot get along without dancing, then let them dance, but always in presence of and under the supervision of the parents, and in a manner that effectually removes, as much as possible, the great dangers to which so intimate an association with persons of different sex subjects

the holy virtue of innocence. If they do not neglect any precious time or any occupation which is more useful, the dance will likely be free from sin, and may be regarded as a sort of mere athletic exercise. But what at the same time excites wonderment in us, are the astonishing exhibitions of bodily strength and endurance of which so many lads and lasses are capable on the dancing platform, while in every-day life they imagine that they are too weak and feeble to go even a half mile on foot when there is question of attending Mass. In the act of dancing, however, they fatigue themselves very much by hopping and skipping about, a distance which if put together, would amount to many miles. Of course sometimes it happens too, that one of the fair dancers sinks to the floor of the dancing hall — a lifeless corpse from over exertion, and that many others when leaving the ball room for home, bear along within themselves the germ of a chronic and painful disease and of a premature death. But that does not matter at all to our light-headed youth. They simply continue to dance as heretofore.

But let us grant that not every kind of dancing, *per se*, is sinful. Francis de Sales, without doubt one of the most lovable saints, says in his *Philothea*, which cannot be perused too often: "There are good dances, you say, (he allows this objection to be made): and I tell you, the best are no good. It is true, dances and balls are, of *their nature, indifferent actions*; yet, not withstanding, *this sort of amusement inclines over to evil and is replete with danger.*"

If you have a barrel of powder in your cellar,

you will take good care not to approach too near to it with a lighted candle. A few grains might become ignited and then cause a frightful explosion. The dangerous powder in man, especially in the heart of the youth or maiden, is sensuality, the lust of the flesh. The intimate association between persons of opposite sex, such as usually takes place at dances; the thorough nervous excitement, which communicates itself to the blood and all the fibres and tissues of the system, (a necessary result of dancing, of the music and the entire surroundings), constitute the firebrand which occasions a proximate danger of enkindling the smouldering embers of carnal lust and to cause it to flare up in weird conflagration. And the danger becomes so much the greater, because the allurement and the momentary intoxication repress, nay, even suppress every thought of God's omnipresence, of judgment and eternity. Is not St. Francis de Sales, right, then, when he says: *The best dances are not good? They incline more to evil and are a prolific source of peril?*

But you say, I have already danced frequently and yet I did not experience any dangerous temptations. — Well, the horny hand of the blacksmith has little or no sensation when catching up a piece of hot iron or a burning coal. Examine yourself and see if your conscience be not also dead and hardened? And have you not suffered any temptations *afterwards and in consequence of your dancing?!* And who warrants you that you will not be tempted at the next dance you attend, and so violently that you will succumb? "*He that loveth danger shall perish in it.*" (Ecclesiasticus, 3, 27).

Yet, as we have already observed, it avails us nothing to argue against dancing. People have danced at all times and will continue to do so, just as they have committed sin in all ages and will continue to become guilty of sinful transgressions. I shall adduce from the past merely a few judgments and facts which, after serious reflection, are very apt to give young people an entirely different view from their own on dancing, and, maybe, will prevail upon parents to think five and ten times before they allow their children to go to the dance or to the ball.

In the senate at Rome, Cato brought the accusation against a certain consul, that he had danced and, therefore, *disgraced* his office. Cicero, who had undertaken to defend the consul, (just as lawyers also at the present day are ever ready to deny facts), did not know how to manage the case in any other way than to make a flat denial of the entire dancing episode. For, he argued: "*Nobody dances, unless he is either drunk or insane.*"

Speaking of a Roman lady, Sallust observes, "*she dances too well to be a decent woman.*" And you, O frivolous filly who are so fond of dancing, were Sallust, the heathen, to see you, he would also remark about you *that you dance too well to be a decent young lady.* Do you resent this? — Settle it with the heathen, and then scold and rant about the earnest admonition of the priest.

Passing from the heathens to the Jews, we find *facts*, which speak louder than words. Whilst Moses was sojourning forty days with Jehovah on the top of the mountain, the Jews who were rest-

ing in their camp grew somewhat tired of waiting. By way of pastime, they began to dance. But in the wake of dancing there followed idolatry and wild excess. Descending from the mountain, Moses beheld the abomination, cast the two tables containing the commandments in holy indignation on the ground so that they were broken into fragments, and then, assembling the faithful sons of Levi said to them : "*Put every man his sword upon his thigh, go and return from gate to gate through the midst of the camp and let every man kill his brother and friend and neighbor . . . . And there were slain that day about three and twenty thousand men.*" (Ex. 32, 27).

There was a dance at the court of King Herod. An excellent first-class ballet girl made her appearance there. She charmed her adulterous father and all the toadies at his court, and is given leave to ask as reward even half of the kingdom. The clever danseuse, urged by her mother, demands the head of St. John the Baptist, and is brutal enough to receive on a dish publicly, before the whole court, the amputated, bloody head, and to carry it to her mother. But she received for her crime a just punishment which was not long in waiting. Some time thereafter the same damsel, so a pious legend says, danced charmingly on the ice. Suddenly the ice breaks. The girl sinks and the sharp edge of the ice, like a knife cuts her head off. Whilst the trunk sank under, the bleeding head continued to spin and dance for a while as yet on the ice. This, perhaps, is but a legend of *olden* times. In modern and most recent days, I remember of having read repeatedly in papers, that

here and there dancers and, more especially, female dancers, had met with death without warning in the midst of their performance, by falling suddenly lifeless to the floor. The account usually closed by stating: — They hurriedly removed the corpse and after a quarter of an hour the dance was resumed with as much frolic as ever!

*Also during the period after Christ* people were addicted to dancing. But what did the greatest *saints and doctors of the Church* say about it? Jerome affirms, that the devil himself was wont to mingle with the dancers and to dance with them. Augustine calls the dancing hall a devil's haunt. St. Chrysostom heard, that some of his Christians had taken part in a dance. During the homily on the following Sunday he exclaimed with great indignation. "Did I but know those who participated in this folly, I would drive them out of the church and not allow them to partake of the Holy Mysteries after they had attended the *works and pomp of Satan*." He then adds an earnest word which young people and their parents ought not to forget *as to dances held on wedding days*. He says: "At the marriage of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Tobias and all other eminent men of antiquity, there is no mention of dancing and other follies. For this reason, too, their marriages were blessed; while, on the contrary, you invoke the Divine wrath upon yourselves, because your weddings (through dancing and other follies) are the occasion of innumerable sins."

What would St. Chrysostom of the fourth century say, were he to witness how so many Catholic

bridal parties, after the marriage ceremony and Holy Communion in the morning, hop and dance throughout the entire night, and thus also become accountable for the many sins of the invited guests who join in the dance? What would he say, if he heard — and the occurrence I allude to does not happen so very rarely — that *Saturday night* was chosen to celebrate the nuptial feast by dancing, eating and drinking? That precisely this time was chosen so that the numerous rioters might not lose a moment for work and wages on a week day, but could find a capital opportunity to sleep off their fatigue on Sunday morning and thus —, to miss hearing Mass? Can this be a happy, blessed matrimony where black, mortal sins play the part of groomsman and bridesmaid?

People danced in the fifth century, and St. Salerian mentions balls in the first place, when enumerating the works of Satanic pride, which a Christian solemnly renounces at Baptism. St. Ephrem asks: Who taught mankind to dance? Neither Peter nor Paul nor any other Apostle. The abominable practice comes from the devil just like idolatry and impurity. Thus we might pass through all centuries down to our own time and always and everywhere find the verification of what I already affirmed, namely, that people danced in all ages, just as they have also always sinned. But always and everywhere, too, did the greatest saints raise their voice in warning against dancing. Almost all catechisms enumerate dancing among the occasions, which endanger chastity, and only too often, serve to desecrate the Sunday. And if the Church,

as a wise and prudent mother, has not issued a special command to forbid dancing, she nevertheless manifests her view clearly enough precisely by the fact, that she positively forbids every species of dancing and public amusements during the so-called closed time of Advent and Lent.

Now, who is right? And still more — who is sincere and well-intentioned towards children, youth and parents in general? The Church and her saints or the world? True, the voice of the Church and her servants in this respect, as in many others, is nothing but "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." In the wilderness of the world there are countless vocal societies, athletic clubs, benevolent associations and besides, numberless lodges. These, collectively and severally, have not once, but often, their concerts in the course of the year; after the concert they have their dances, which last until a late hour next morning; very often there is sandwiched between the two principal numbers of the programme, a rich banquet in which they indulge, to steel themselves, you know, against the hardships of the dance, which, in truth, they say, are quite extraordinary. Next day, of course, a flattering notice must appear in the paper, commending and extolling very highly at least the person, who planned and managed the affair, if not also all those who participated in it, and then, after pouring a halo of glory over the "beautiful" feast the usual hope is expressed that a repetition of the same may follow in the near future. Such is the programme Sunday after Sunday and also on many week days, even in the time

of Advent and Lent! I will not ask, what right have so many Catholics who take part in these countless amusements, to complain of want of employment, want of wages and scarcity of money? Let me simply close with the words of St. Francis de Sales, whom I have already mentioned. He says: "Reflect whilst you are dancing, that at that very moment many are burning in hell, because they have danced. Consider, that in the end you too shall sigh as they do, whilst others are dancing, just as you are now doing. Think that whilst you are there present, death is approaching. See, he comes and invites you to his dance, at which sin takes the place of the violin music."

Reflect on this, young men and women, and act accordingly: otherwise you are not followers of Christ, who invites you to follow Him on the narrow, steep path that leads to Heaven, but children of the world, who shall perish with the world. Think well on this Christian parents, and, therefore, keep your children away from theaters and dances. Should you not, despite your best will, be able to carry this out altogether on account of the universal drift of the times, then take at least those precautionary measures, which I have indicated, in order to avert the proximate danger. If you fail to do this, you may be charged with hating your children, because you allow them to waltz on the broad road to their own perdition. But if you do not fail to do this, even in defiance of the blind inclination and passion of the children and in opposition to the example of the world around you, which seeks to lead you and them astray, then you

may, in truth, be said to love your offspring, because, according to the expression of St. Francis de Sales, you keep away from them those poisonous plants which are most dangerous to their welfare. Amen.

## 21. Guarding against Sensuality.

Quos dedisti mihi, non perdidi ex eis quemquam. Io. 18, 9.

"Of them whom thou hast given me, I have not lost anyone."

In the last few sermons I have directed your attention to those common dangerous occasions, which are rather of a public nature, and which threaten your children from without, — I mean, above all, theaters and dances. True, the Church, solicitous mother that she is, has placed against these dangers a barrier in the form of the holy vows of Baptism, in which children promise to renounce, not alone Satan and his works, *i. e.*, sin, but also his pomps, meaning all occasions which he prepares for mankind by the agency of the world. The child as it grows up, the young man, the young lady, can allow this barrier to remain firm in its place and feel themselves secure within its safe enclosure. But they can also tear it up, break it down, smash it into fragments, as it were, and cast themselves headlong out among the cliffs and rocks and hissing breakers of the ocean. The solicitude and watchfulness of parents, however, must be directed towards preventing such a calamity, so that the children, on the contrary, will be true to their baptismal vows, remain far

removed and, if needs be, will be kept away by sheer force from the perils of the world.

To-day, then, I will illustrate in the first place, by a little anecdote, what has been said on those *exterior* dangers, and, thereupon, point out to you a certain danger, which lurks more especially within the children themselves, I mean *sensuality*.

1. Two refined, wealthy, yet worldly-minded parents had an only daughter. Owing to a special influence of divine grace, without parental co-operation, she developed into a true, Christian virgin. For a long time she contrived to hold aloof as much as possible, from all worldly pleasures, such as balls and entertainments at the theater, invitations to which had been offered her in great profusion; she succeeded in evading these by meeting all desires and invitations on the part of her parents with excuses that were sometimes of a jocose, at other times of a serious, but at all times of an innocent nature. At last, the parents sought to urge her into accepting a splendid matrimonial offer. Quietly but firmly the daughter expressed to them these sentiments: "I have already chosen a spouse, and that a much more beautiful, wealthy and noble one than you propose, namely Jesus Christ, the King of kings. To Him and to Him alone do I desire to belong in the capacity of an humble Sister of Charity." Incensed at these words, the parents exclaimed: "Just wait, we shall rid you yet of your stupid thoughts of going to the convent! During the next season you shall go with us regularly to the theater and the ball. There you will see and hear a totally different world

and soon get other thoughts." Thus the poor girl was now forced for months, evening after evening, into the theater and the ball room. The season passed, but the daughter still remained firm in her determination. "But then," inquired the parents, "did the theater and balls make on you no impression at all? — "A most powerful one," replied the daughter. "At the performances and during the dances, I used to keep my eyes closed as much as possible, lest they should witness anything frivolous or indecent, breathing at the same time a quiet prayer. Then it seemed to me as though I saw hell open directly under the theater and the ball room, and how thousands of evil spirits sought to ensnare and bind the visitors and dancers separately with toils and ropes, in order to pull them down into the abyss underneath. This made me shudder. And so my visits to theater and balls confirmed me in my resolution, that the sick ward shall be my ball room. There I will play the role which my King shall assign to me, and the sighs and groans of pain uttered by the sick, shall furnish the music, according to which I propose to direct my steps." — The parents at last gave their consent, and the reward of their sacrifice was, that, in a short while, they too were transformed from good-for-nothing votaries of the world into staunch Christians.

Parents and children! What is my object in mentioning this example? In order, perhaps, to prevail upon you to do as this daughter and these parents have done? — Such a grace and vocation, maybe, would be too great, too sublime, too extra-

ordinary for you. But no, young men and young ladies! If it be the holy Will of God, you may remain undisturbed in the world, and you, parents, may keep your children about you in the world as long as you live. But remember one thing, viz., that the theater and the dancing floor, such as they are at the present day, offer, if not always the proximate, at least a very near occasion for sin. But Truth Infallible says: "He that loveth danger shall perish in it" (Ecclus, 3, 27).

Should you find an excuse, however, or even an incitement to take part in auch dangerous amusements, owing to the alluring example of the children of the world, reflect on the earnest words of your best Friend, the Divine Saviour, who says: *Wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it.* (Matth. 7, 13).

Wherefore, O children, young men and maidens, do not dance and skip on the broad way of dangerous amusements such as the dance and the theater certainly are, to your own perdition. And you, O parents, restrain them from the yawning peril, with firm hand and steady rein. But if you wish to do this successfully, your watchfulness must

2. be directed against a secret foe, whom you will find lurking within the very heart of your own children. — I mean sensuality or that hankering after gratification which, maybe, is still asleep in the hearts of your children, but will soon awake and begin to grow in influence more and more.

A gardener keeps his eyes open, especially in springtime, and has a sharp lookout for weeds that chance to sprout in his beds, for insects which infest his little trees and shrubs, and no sooner does he detect anything injurious than his hand is ever ready to pluck up or to remove it; for he knows that the hope for an abundant harvest depends entirely on his own care and vigilance. — You also, Christian parents, are like so many gardeners, and your children, their immortal souls, appear like so many heavenly plants in the garden of His Church. Your task is to raise and to train them to bear fruit, until the Heavenly Gardener, filled with joy at the sight of the beautiful trees and their ripened fruit, shall have them dug up out of the soil here on this earth by His messenger, the Angel of Death, to transplant them into the celestial garden of paradise above. But whilst this is done, Satan, the enemy of God, of yourselves and your children, cannot look on quietly. Therefore he sows around your children an abundance of weeds, so that they may creep about and overrun them and thus withdraw the sap and strength so necessary for them to thrive. These are the perils of the world, properly speaking, which you must keep away from your children.

But, alas, alas, in consequence of original sin the enemy even succeeded in introducing secretly all kinds of vermin and venomous insects, as it were, into the very heart of the child. To mention only one of them, there is, for instance the concupiscence of the flesh, sensuality, which very soon develops into an unruly appetite for gratification,

especially in eating and drinking, and only too soon into a desire for impurity. Parents who imagine and even say: "My child is an angel" — are blind, stoneblind. And if this their blindness, as it usually happens, brings them to such a pass, that they treat their children as if they were angels, without even noticing in them or endeavoring in the least to suppress the first movements of sensuality, notably that craving for gratification, they prove themselves to be the greatest enemies of their children. For they foster and strengthen in their hearts the hideous vermin of sensuality with its thousand heads and numberless members, and the child need not grow old until sensuality shall have wholly penetrated it interiorly and consumed its marrow and health altogether.

It will be impossible for me to show in detail how parents, preeminently the mother, are to watch and check the first movements of sensuality or the desire for gratification; otherwise I should have to touch upon some very delicate subjects. I shall content myself with giving merely a few slight hints.

Whatever is necessary, or, at least, useful for their children in the line of clothing, food, dwelling, parents should endeavor to provide, of course, in keeping with their station in life and financial standing. — To do this, however, there is required for the most part, much toil and labor and judicious economy. Yet, these duties and, of course, duties which extend throughout a whole lifetime, young people take upon themselves when they enter upon the matrimonial state. If they are un-

willing to fulfil them, they never ought to have become married. For, grievous faults against these obligations, for instance drunkenness, gambling on the part of the father; sloth, wastefulness, pride on the part of the mother, stamp them as thieves and robbers, nay, make them worse than these; for, cruel and unnatural parents that they are, they sin against their children, their own flesh and blood; whilst thieves and robbers, as a rule, become guilty of a misdeed only against the possessions of strangers. We have already mentioned on a former occasion what we had to say on this score. Parents, however, who are sensible, and who sincerely love their children, should withhold from them whatever exceeds the bounds of necessity and usefulness.

If a piece of ground be manured too much, there is great danger that the good seed will be choked, whilst the weeds shoot up all the stronger. If the bodily being of the child, which fundamentally is an animal one, be fostered, nurtured and cherished excessively, parents need not wonder, should this animal element grow steadily stronger. Nor need they feel surprised if its dangerous cravings and appetites break out in a still more irresistible manner, while the germs of faith, hope, charity, piety, innocence, — which God had placed in the child's heart — find neither room nor nourishment to develop, nay, in a short time are even smothered entirely.

There are numerous faults committed by many a parent against the general principle, according to which one ought to provide only what is neces-

sary and useful, and to withhold from children things that are superfluous. These faults, of course, are not always intentionally evil. The seeming parental love appears to excuse them, and their consequences are never thought of. However, such love is a blind, injurious love, and the evil consequences thereof shall not be wanting. Thus, for example, one meets children, who are busy eating well-nigh throughout the whole day. The mother fills their hands every few moments, as soon as they manifest the least desire or childish whim, or she lets all victuals in cupboard, kitchen and cellar wide open, so that the little ones can nibble and stealthily take as much as they please, — a habit, by the bye, which is abominable, and can become extremely dangerous. For, such filching of eatables and drinkables leads to stealing money, as the little ones grow to be dishonest from early youth, already in their parents' home. They begin with little pilferings and end with great thefts. But this I mention only by the way. I now ask, what can and will become of the children, if these, during the first, and unfortunately, often during many years, are nothing but little eating machines? I will not mention at all, that this frequent and excessive eating is highly injurious to bodily health and a source of many diseases. A physician who had a wide experience, told me one day: "We are indebted for most of our patients to the fact that children and adult people eat so much and so often." Were these little and big children to eat and drink less and not so frequently, many of the medical profession would be obliged to give up their

avocation and look for a different employment. But the welfare of the soul is above that of the body. I say, therefore, that the flesh is nurtured beyond measure in children whose life is consumed in eating. The apostle speaks of Christians, "whose God is their belly" (Philippians, 3, 19). They did not sink so low all at once, but the education, which during the years of childhood was wholly directed in the interests of gratifying the flesh, at last bore its evil fruit.

See then to it, Christian parents, that you provide sufficient food for your children, accustoming them to regular meals as also to a healthy,plain, substantial diet. Delicacies and sweet-meats ruin both teeth and stomach. But still worse would it be, to pander to the sensuality of the palate by procuring new dishes day after day — a gratification which is incompatible with a truly Christian bringing up. You must not even allow your children to eat in a squeamish manner at table. It is certainly not very commendable when children speak of their favorite dish and shove other victuals aside. And still less commendable, nay, still worse is it, if the mother in her blindness always holds the favorite dish in readiness for her pet child. Should the little one, either when it is still small or grown up somewhat, make the remark at table in that truly pert and stubborn manner, saying: "I dont like that dish; I want something else," the only correct treatment will be, that father and mother reply something like this: "Child you are not yet hungry; therefore you must fast for the time being until your hunger will be-

come evident, by giving you the right appetite and make you eat." More I neither can nor wish to say. I will merely add yet this word of exhortation: Check the sensuality of your children also as regards sleeping. Have a fixed, and that a pretty early time for them to go to bed. Insist upon it that they rise regularly, not when they please, but at a fixed hour and at the first call; do not allow your children to sleep together in the same bed, but, if at all possible, provide separate couches for them. Such is the rule observed in a truly Christian family. You may not so much as surmise the evil results of the opposite method; the Guardian Angels, however, see these evil consequences and weep over them.

Now do reflect, Christian parents, that your children are not little animals; for their small body is animated with an immortal soul. This immortal soul, however, is subject to many dangers which arise from the little body already in early childhood. The dangers alluded to, are those precisely which spring from sensuality, an inordinate desire for gratification, impurity. As regards the larger children, you must direct your special vigilance toward keeping them away from those exterior allurements, which by exciting sensuality, elicit therefrom the dangers mentioned before. Therefore, I exhort and beseech you once more, keep your grown up children as much as possible away from gatherings where both sexes commingle promiscuously, such as dances and theaters. As the little ones do not as yet suspect, do not recognize the dangers of sensuality at all,

you, being the visible guardian angels, must make your influence felt by observing with watchful eye the movements and turns of this insidious foe; by advising, instructing, nay, by checking, breaking, beating back with determination and punishment the onslaught made by sensuality against the full innocence of the child's stainless soul.

By so doing, you set, right in the first years, your children on the straight path on which they shall journey as Christian children towards their goal. And this is the path of temperance, soberness, nay, of selfdenial and mortification. If they walk on these paths from tenderest childhood, you may also cherish the fond hope, that they will preserve the white robe of innocence and purity of heart, spotless unto the end. Amen.

## 22. Duties to be observed when there is Question of choosing the State of matrimony.

> Omne quodcunque facitis in verbo aut in opere, omnia in nomine Domini Nostri Jesu Christi.
> Col. 3, 17.
>
> "All whatsoever you do in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."

In order to explain the second great obligation of parents, namely watchfulness over their children, we have mentioned in the last few discourses the *objects* to which parental vigilance must be directed. These objects, chiefly stated, are the *associations* and *amusements* which children usually seek, and that base *sensuality*, or an inordinate desire for gratification. For Satan makes use of all of these as most powerful allies in the warfare which he wages against the salvation of the souls of children.

I consider it highly useful, nay, even necessary to recommend to the vigilant care of parents yet another very important matter, especially since its discussion shall afford us an opportunity to lay particular stress on some momentous duties which children, when they are grown up, have to fulfil. The subject alluded to, is the *choice of the matrimonial state*, of which we will speak to-day, and its

antecedent courtship, which we propose to discuss the next time.

I would premise and exhort parents most earnestly, not to speak to their children too soon on this subject, and not even to discuss or allow these things to be talked about in their presence. Very often, sad to say, there are many faults committed in this respect. The evil consequence is, that that delicacy and sensitive feeling of modesty, which are safeguards against sin, are lost, and that among boys and girls an alarming precociousness is developed, which, like a poisonous worm, corrodes that childlike sentiment of innocence, piety and that pure love for Jesus and Mary. The complaint, that there are nowadays no longer any children with truly childlike sentiments, is only too general, and alas, but too true. The blame thereof rests, for the most part, with parents and the elder sons and daughters of the family. From the mouth of these the little ones hear all kinds of frivolous conversations about love affairs, marrying and courting. All of this talk acts like oil poured upon the fire of sensuality, which glows within the bosom of the child. No wonder that it flames up the stronger and begins to consume and reduce to ashes the innermost marrow of the child, and that the youngster already knows, and, perhaps, even does, in his tenth or twelfth year, what he ought to be aware of only when he is, let us say, twenty or twenty-four years of age.

Having considered this subject already in the 15th sermon, I purpose to touch upon, or rather to repeat it but briefly. Besides, the nature of this

all-important matter is so delicate, that it seems advisable to mention in public only what is absolutely necessary.

When children are grown to full maturity, it is quite natural, that parental love should urge fathers and mothers to think seriously of their offspring's future state of life and to seek to provide for them. Here, then, hold good all those directions, which we have given in the 9th discourse on a choice of a state of life in general. But, as their application to the election or non-election of the matrimonial state is of very great importance, we propose to-day the following two questions for the benefit of young men and young ladies and their parents:

1. What are the points which they must ascertain?
2. How can they arrive at a clear and correct knowledge of the same?

1. In answer to the first question I say — Two things must be established; in the first place, whether it be the *Will of God* that the respective sons and daughters, young men and young women, should enter the matrimonial state; that is to say: Is the married state for these the God-appointed means to insure their temporal, and, above all, their eternal happiness? And, secondly, what person shall they choose for this union throughout life in accordance with the Will of God?

We have shown in the 9th discourse the necessity of asking the first question and answering it clearly. In whatever God permits, does, or ordains for the life of each human being in particular, He always has its eternal salvation in view. Man, the

christian, is obliged to do the same thing. He learns immediately on the first page of the Catechism — "I am in this world to know God, to love and serve Him and thus to attain Heaven." Therefore he must know to a certainty, if this or that state or vocation be to him a means, to serve and to return to God. If we are to regulate, in particular, every thought, desire, word and deed according to the Holy Will of God, then, also must we strive to ascertain and follow the same divine Will in regard to the state of our life which, in a general sense, shall embrace and determine all our actions and omissions. Applying this fundamental truth to marriage, it is evident, that God does not want all of mankind without exception to embrace the state of matrimony; it is evident, I say, that the married state is not for all the best, or even the only means by which to serve God and to go to Heaven. When discussing this question we need not regard heathens and infidels at all. For Christians the Will of God is the Gospel. But now the Gospel does not contain merely the Ten Commandments, but, amongst other precepts which point out the way to a higher perfection, also the *counsel of virginity;* and it is a dogma of the Catholic Church, that the state of virginity, especially when confirmed and strengthened by a voluntary vow, is, in itself, a more perfect state of life than that of matrimony. Such is the clear and distinct teaching of St. Paul (1. Cor. 7, 38) when he says: "He that giveth his virgin in marriage, doth well; and he that giveth her not, *doth better.*" The inner reason of this doctrine is alleged by him

in the same passage thus: *He that is married and married people in general, are solicitous for the things of the world, and how they may please each other, and are, therefore, divided; but he that is unmarried and unmarried folks, virgins, think on the things of the Lord and how they may please God alone.* The Church in the Council of Trent has given expression to this apostolical doctrine in these very clear and precise terms: "If anyone says that the conjugal state is to be preferred to a life of virginity or celibacy, and that it is not better and more blissful to remain in the state of virginity or celibacy, than to be joined in wedlock, let him be anathema." (Sess. 24. Can. 10). This virginity, whether observed by such as stand alone in the world, or whether one seeks and finds a place of refuge within the garden of the cloister, is a substantial part of the Gospel. True, to lead a life of virginity is not a command, given to persons individually, but rather a counsel, and that a counsel to which the Saviour, when giving it, added these earnest words (Matth. 19, 11): "He that can take, let him take it."

But His invitation to a life of virginity must never be wholly without result. As long and wherever His Gospel is preached, so long, too, there must be found generous souls, who, taking His invitation, also follow it. Nay, I do not hesitate in the least to state right here publicly, that experience bears out the assertion, made by many a saintly priest whether stationed in the world or in some religious community, to the effect, that numerous vocations to a life of virginity are a reliable index as to the flourishing condition of religious

life in a congregation; on the contrary, few or no religious vocations at all in a congregation, are a sure sign that the hearts of at least the majority of young men and young ladies, also the fathers and mothers, are filled with everything except a love for Jesus and His Virginal Mother.

This much must be apparent from what has been said, viz., that there are two states of life which adult youth may choose: — The state of matrimony or the state of virginity. The first is good, the second is better. From these they must make a choice, and that a reasonable and Christian one. In order to choose in such a manner, they must seek to find out with as much certitude as possible, which of the two states of life God has destined for them, and which of the two is the safer road to Heaven. Such *knowledge*, not a mere feeling, opining or imagining, is for the temporal and eternal future, of the greatest importance. The saying goes, that of one hundred couples, at least ninety, soon after their wedding, would rather not have been married. And the almost countless number of divorces, within a few months from the marriage ceremony, is, in this most serious affair, a fulfilment of the old adage: *To act to-day, and then to reflect on it to-morrow, is a practice that usually causes deep sorrow.*

After the question, whether virginity or matrimony shall be chosen, has been decided before God with a sure and quiet affirmative in favor of married life, then comes the second consideration, namely, — whom shall you choose to be your companion throughout life? Were this question always con-

sidered in the light of reason and faith, and were its solution sought before God and with His aid, all would be easy. Because the Heavenly Father who instituted matrimony for very important purposes, would bring about a happy choice among His children by means of that natural love, which He can and actually does instil into juvenile hearts, and by means of a certain arrangement of exterior circumstances, which are entirely subordinate to His providence. Isaac and Rebecca, Tobias and Sarah, are splendid examples in this regard. But young people thwart, alas, but too often the dispensation of an all-wise and all-merciful Providence, and, what is still worse, pervert that natural affection, which comes from God, into a sinful, sensual gratification and an all-consuming passion. And this base passion is certainly not that love which is so necessary for matrimonial bliss, no more than a charred coal heap or ash pile is fire, or has the power to give heat. It is difficult to impart counsel or help in this case. For passion blinds its victim; and very often it must, no doubt be a source of the greatest anxiety to watchful parents, when they are constrained to see their son or daughter cast themselves blindfolded into a matrimonial union, which will prove for them not a haven of rest and bliss, but rather an abyss of perdition. Shall I give a few hints to such as do not wish to act blindly in the momentous business of choosing a helpmate? I will say briefly in connection with what I have already said on a former occasion, and for the sake of refreshing it: *Religion, Christian habits, Christian life must be considered as*

*indispensably necessary qualifications in the person about to be chosen.* Therefore, from the very outset do not regard, nay, positively exclude from your choice heretics, infidels, fallen away Catholics, and such as do not practice their religion; young men, who for years have been addicted to drinking, gambling and other evil passions; young ladies who have darkened the splendor of their character, their honor, by street walking, by patronizing dances and theaters. — The reason is clear. Without religion and virtue, there is no luck, no blessing, no security on the way to Heaven — not to mention the subject of the education of children at all. It will also not do to rely on those assurances in which promises are made to reform, after one is married. I know of cases where the Communion and Mass on the day of marriage were the last ever received or attended. Do not accept any conversion or amendment as sincere, unless it has *preceded* marriage and been tested for a long time.

Concerning qualifications and prerequisites from an earthly point of view, the priest does not need to say much. Parents and good and experienced friends may give advice in such matters. The priest can only say — "Look before you leap." Be not deceived and carried away by mere outward appearances. Look more to interior, permanent worth, than to exterior transient glamor! Verily, common human prudence, too, demands in the first place, also *good health*. Thus for instance a young lady, ailing and suffering already for many years, will provide much better for herself and others, if she bear the condition of her feeble health as a

cross imposed by Almighty God, entertaining at the same time the childlike confidence, that He in His Fatherly Love, will not abandon her. Let her continue to serve Him with an undivided heart, rather than, under the pretext of becoming settled for life, intrude or permit herself to be thrust into the state of matrimony, which should bring to her, as being one of the daughters of Eve, unspeakable, interminable misery. Moreover, indeed, the healthfulness of children depends, generally speaking, on that of their parents. — Furthermore, marriage between people of different nationality, at least as a general rule, is not to be encouraged, for the reason, that, aside of other disagreeable consequences, such a lifelong union necessarily presupposes full conformity of character in both parties. Of the young man one ought to require a paying, and, as much as possible, also a permanent occupation; of the young lady a devotion to house duties, experience in all kinds of domestic employment or house work, and a training in economy. All other things, such as etiquette, beauty, finery displayed in hair or dress, ability to play on the piano, to paint, to sing, to dance, even the dowry should be taken but little or not at all into account, where there is question of insuring matrimonial happiness, that reaches out even into eternity.

In the case of a certain son whose father possessed rich estates, a broom once upon a time decided the choice of a helpmate for life. His father had admonished him time and again, saying, "If you wish to contract a happy union, choose for yourself a wife, who is thoroughly devoted to

housework, not a mere doll that apes the fashion and will stumble over a broomstick. — One day his father entertained a large company of friends, when also a number of young ladies who were of marriageable age and all eager candidates for matrimony, put in an appearance. "To-day," thought the son, "I will try the counsel which my father never wearies of repeating."

Whilst the guests were at table, he withdrew a moment and laid a broomstick across the doorstep. After dinner the company betook themselves into an adjacent grove. Most of the young ladies walked over the broom, some stumbled across. One young maiden stooped down, picked it up and set it in a corner. The young man proposed to this one, obtaining her consent, and never had to regret the choice he made. For his wife possessed all the qualifications to render him happy.

This much as to the choice of the state of matrimony and a future helpmate. Now if we ask:

2. "How can young people arrive at a knowledge which is so necessary in order to make a good choice?" — I answer: *By means of the light from above and with the aid of reason.* The former must be *asked for in prayer,* the latter we must seek to acquire *by reflection and taking counsel.*

The Church before every important action recites her prayer: "Come, Holy Spirit." She teaches us to pray that God may grant us the spirit to think and perform what is righteous (8. Sund. after Pent.). Would our young men and maidens still be Christians, did they not pray before making that choice which usually decides their

entire life, nay, their eternity? God might abandon them in anger to the blindness of their passion which would lead them into temporal and, probably also, into eternal ruin. Therefore, they must pray, and that sincerely and perseveringly. Parents must admonish them and pray with them and for them. In this connection I recommend once more, and have done already in the 9th discourse, the devotion of the six Sundays in honor of St. Aloysius, which can be performed at any time during the year.

This devotion is by no means only for those who perhaps contemplate to choose the state of perfection. St. Aloysius is the patron of *all* youth, and the special patron for the preservation of innocence and of a happy choice of a state of life. But God assuredly wills not that all young men and young ladies should choose the state of religious perfection, and experience testifies that St. Aloysius obtained for many who had performed this devotion, the necessary light and even opened the way in spite of difficulties to a choice of the state of matrimony, on which God's blessing rested visibly. Therefore pray and pray much and zealously!

*Moreover ponder well and take counsel.* Ponder well, that is to say, having in view the end for which you are created, Heaven, ask yourselves: — Is matrimony for me personally really a safe road to Heaven? What means, what hindrances in regard to my last end shall I find in this state of life? — Only when put in this manner, is the question correct, and only thus can its answer also be a

prudent and wise one. All other earthly considerations come in only in the second place, and must remain subordinate to the first. Questions which appeal to sensuality, are to be excluded, as they cloud the clear fountain, and with it, the entire stream of life. In case you, O married people, did not think or ponder on all of this before your marriage, I am positive that you already experienced many bitter consequences resulting from your blindfold leap into matrimony. Your duty, then, is henceforth only the greater, to make a good use of the nuptial state as a means of preparation for Heaven, and to exhort diligently your adult children that they should think seriously on the momentous step and also *seek counsel* where they best can find it. In the smallest affairs of every day life you do not reflect merely yourselves, but also gladly ask older and more experienced folks for advice and thankfully receive the well-intentioned words of counsel. And in view of this, ought not young and inexperienced people, who are so easily hoodwinked and led astray by their folly, yea by blind passion, ask advice in the momentous affair of a choice of life, which, I repeat it once more, shall bring either happiness or misery for the balance of their whole existence? Just keep on, thou thoughtless, frivolous youth! Regret shall yet come, but then it will be too late to avert the misfortune! Vast is the number of married people who whine and lament amidst unalterable misery, "Oh that I had asked and followed the advice of my parents — of my father confessor! I would not have married at all, or at least not him

or her — I would not then be unhappy as I am now!"

Wherefore, O young men and young ladies, frankly talk the matter over with your parents. They mean well with you and will counsel you in accordance with their best knowledge and ability. Of course, parents have no absolute right to command or to prohibit in the matter of choosing a state of life. Should blind passion, however, goad the son or daughter on into a union which is evidently dangerous to their real welfare, parents have the right and the duty to declare firmly: "Never with my consent and aid, or with my blessing!" Then woe to the child, if, not withstanding, it rushes into matrimony without the blessing, — yea, rather with a prospect of the curse of the Fourth Commandment!

Even more than with their parents young people ought to consult with their *father confessor*. He is not merely a judge, appointed to forgive or retain sins; he is also a father, a teacher, a physician of the souls who entrust themselves to his direction. These several offices he administers not assisted merely by his natural abilities and the reliable aid of a varied experience, but also enlightened and directed by the bountiful graces of his holy vocation. Wherefore, — to put it as mildly as possible — it would be the height of imprudence, if Catholic young men and maidens were to commence keeping company and continue the same, without conferring with their father confessor. If the company is forbidden *per se*, — and such is the case as to courtships with non-Catholics — or, if time and

again it proved an occasion for interior as well as exterior sins against chastity, then the concealment thereof in the confessional exposes the penitent to a proximate danger of making one unworthy confession after the other. And what can young people expect, if they pave the way to the state of matrimony with such terrible sins as the repeated sacrilege of making a bad confession and receiving an unworthy Communion?

In conclusion I exhort and beseech parents and children in the words with which St. Paul begins and urges on both his doctrine on the different states of life: *All in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!* If this hold good of all, even the slightest and most indifferent actions of everyday life, it certainly applies in an especial manner to a choice of a state of life, which usually decides a whole career. Pray, then, that you may make a good choice, and deliberate together in the name of Jesus, that is to say, direct your heart and eye firmly and immovably towards that salvation which Jesus solely has brought and alone can give. Then and only then shall your choice be a good one and obtain the blessing of God. Amen.

## 23. Keeping Company, or Courtship before Marriage.

Qui amat periculum, in illo peribit.
Ecclus. 3, 27.

"He that loveth danger shall perish in it."

In our last discourse we considered the choice of a state of life by grown up sons and daughters in reference to matrimony. Such choice is an act of personal liberty which belongs to the children. However, this liberty must needs be watched over by the parents. Parents must deliberate and pray long and earnestly, so that the choice may be made not in accordance with the whims of blind sensuality, but in keeping with the rules of reason and Holy Faith. Only in this manner can both parties arrive at the right knowledge, as to whether it be the Will of God, that the child should enter the state of matrimony and as to what person should be chosen as a partner. Thus alone is the old proverb fulfilled which says, that *matrimonial unions are formed in heaven*. If nowadays such happy marriages are comparatively few, parents and children are to blame for it. Both parties are open to charge, because they do not deliberate, do not pray. Not God's Holy Will, but other quite different influences urge, shove, pull and drag people into marriage. Regret, of course, follows,

but cannot undo what has been done, nor make a good choice out of an evil one. It is a terrible situation, — two persons united indissolubly with each other until death, whom God did not intend either to get married at all, or at least not with such a partner. Therefore, with love for all, I repeat the injunction once more: Watch, pray, deliberate!

To-day I shall add a few earnest words on the personal relation which ordinarily precedes the closing of the marriage contract. Let me state here briefly, that there should be no courtship — 1. without purpose, 2. without prospect, 3. without supervision.

1. Without purpose. Courting without a view to marriage, is but the ulterior development of a fault which I have already mentioned. Parents and older brothers and sisters speak without the least delicacy in presence of small children about matters, which concern matrimony, nay, even about courting etc., in the very room where these little ones dwell. Scarcely, then, have the children attended school for a short while, when they either begin to conduct, or continue the love affairs of the nursery by means of little notes, pictures or verses, which they are wont to send to each other. We priests and teachers endeavor to counteract all this, but our efforts usually prove fruitless, because they are not aided by watchfulness and co-operation on the part of parents.

Moreover, another fault is committed which concerns directly the interior of children. The hearts of the little ones are not filled with genuine

piety and love towards Jesus and Mary during the tender years of infancy; they remain lukewarm and cold, and so barren and dreary, that while the guardian angels weep, the demons rejoice thereat. It is an easy matter for the evil spirits to introduce secretly into those empty hearts the sparks of sensual inclinations; these, then, succeed only too soon in quenching the sparks of Divine Love which baptism has instilled into the infant's heart. When the time for First Communion arrives, the Divine Saviour is forced to descend into a barren, charred heart. How gladly would He inflame those young hearts with his divine, chaste love! But His love finds within them no congenial hearth and no material to enkindle. No wonder that shortly after the boys and girls can dream or talk of nothing else but love affairs and courtships. Growing sensuality within, all kinds of trashy reading without, too free association of persons of both sexes, suggestive conversations and lewdness, and the example of all that surrounds them, cause the fire to glow only the stronger. And thus such courtships, which have not and can not have any firm foundation to rest on, are become a real pest, as a general rule. They may be regarded as a sort of spiritual consumption, which slowly, but surely, consumes the hearts of our youth, breaks their moral strength, and kills all true religious life. Even when the exterior exercises of religion, such as the hearing of Mass on Sundays and frequent reception of the Holy Sacraments are still retained, they are performed in a mechanical manner, without interior interest, often through compulsion or routine.

And thus may these exercises be likened to the rosy freshness on the cheeks of the consumptive. The inexperienced will consider these blooming cheeks as a sign of healthfulness, while the experienced eye will detect beneath them the gnawing worm of death.

Preserve your children, O parents, by constant vigilance, by serious reproof, nay, if necessary, by a befitting punishment, from this epidemic disease of entertaining courtships to no purpose. By far better would it be for your children to be lowered into an early grave in consequence of bodily consumption, than that this malignant fever should kill their soul. And you, young men and young maidens, remember well that you shall not play with poison and fire, and such precisely are courtships for young folks, when carried on to no purpose.

2. The same also applies to keeping company *without a prospect*, that is to say, without a well-founded possibility or hope of entering into a marriage which bids fair to become a happy one. Such hope depends on the personal, corporal and spiritual qualifications, and on the exterior circumstances in which the two persons about to contract marriage, are placed. If, moreover, two persons are situated so poorly and hopelessly as to exterior circumstances, that there can be no reason or foundation for expecting to find a way of procuring the necessary means for the support of a family, such two persons ought not to begin a foolish and hazardous love affair, but recall to themselves the word of the Saviour: "Which of

you having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have where withal to finish it." (Luke 14, 28). Otherwise, they shall not only be laughed at, but shall also cast themselves into unspeakable misery. Thoughtless courtships and marriages are frequently the cause of gaunt necessity and poverty, which are so much the more disconsolate and weigh only the heavier, because they are not sent by the Almighty, but have been caused by ourselves. *In the time of youth they do not endeavor to learn anything*, at least no occupation that could become a lasting and profitable source of earnings. The best time is frittered away with a little occasional employment, but more with play and trifles. They also fail to lay by anything. Theaters, balls, parties, excursions, eating and drinking, pride and vanity displayed in senseless finery, are like so many huge sieves with countless holes, through which the few pennies are readily shaken.

Such is the world! And at the same time, they follow the universal fashion of courting! Such being the state of affairs, is there even a shadow of prospect for a happy matrimony? And but too often the parents themselves permit, and even countenance, such courtships. One should almost think that many parents only thought of how they can get rid of their children as soon as possible — if only a wedding can be celebrated! The want, the misery, which appear before the window already in the evening of the wedding day, or rather peer out ominously from every nook and corner in the interior of the rented quarters, are not seen, of

course, as no one wishes to see them. Now, do you call this to provide for your marriageable children? And is this the sort of beautiful provision and secure settlement in life of which you were wont to talk so much? — Here, also, we may treat of that exceedingly dangerous, evil custom, by which children, and only too often with the knowledge and free consent of their parents, begin a courtship which is altogether too early. Or do boys and girls of fourteen, fifteen and sixteen years already want to get married? You say, "No, they do not intend and also shall not get married yet. They only go with each other. It's the style, you know." Now Jesus also speaks of the style of the children of the world to dance on the broad road into hell and, when speaking of them he exclaims: "How narrow is the gate and strait is the way that leadeth to life and few there are that find it!" (Matth. 7, 14). Now, as for the case under consideration, there are few young people who, under the advice and direction of their parents, steer clear of keeping company where there is no matrimonial purpose or prospect; the consequence is, there are few young men and young women who attain a blessed matrimonial union, and, through it, eternal life. On the other hand, there are exceedingly many who carry on courtships without purpose or prospect; for them these courtships, when continued for years, are a broad road on which young people rush to temporal and eternal perdition. —

And this the more so, when such courtships are carried on

3. *without supervision*, as is but too often the case. Here those strict and severe rules, concerning the proximate occasion to sin, find an application. The Holy Spirit says expressly: "He that loveth danger, shall perish in it". In accordance with this and many other expressions in Holy Writ, theologians maintain: Whosoever seeks the proximate occasion of sin, or does not avoid or break with it, thereby alone already commits sin, aside of the sins which he actually may commit therein. Such a one confides presumptuously in the power of God's grace, which so often warns against the proximate occasion, and everytime there is question of mortal sin, he is strictly obliged also to confess that he neglected to avoid the occasion thereof. Apropos, notice may be taken of this point also by those young people, who go to confession, for a long period of time and run from one confessor to another without ever breathing even one syllable about their courtships, not even when they cultivate such relations with non-Catholics. Such young people may succeed in deceiving their confessor, but God — never!

Keeping company without supervision, I mean that associating and being together of two persons of different sex under the title and cloak of courtship, is, evidently, as a general rule, *one of the most dangerous of all occasions*. I shall not deny the possibility, that in particular cases the character of the two persons, the short duration of being in each others presence, the application of necessary precautions, may keep interior and exterior sins at a distance. I have no desire to exaggerate; the bare

truth is serious enough. And the truth is, *that courtships without surveillance are pretty nigh always an infallible, proximate occasion for grievous sins against holy chastity.* I say, *for grievous sins;* for, remember well, all sins against the sixth commandment, even mere thoughts and desires, not only actions, are grievous sins, provided they are voluntary. In our case, however, they are voluntary, as to their cause, when the occasion is deliberately sought and entertained. And now take two young persons; they keep each other's company, are engaged, but are unwilling to get married or cannot do so as yet, from reasons that may be good or bad; (in either case these reasons should have restrained them, in the first place, both from premature courting and from the subsequent engagement). For months and years they are now together once or twice per week on the so called lovers' evening. Alone, without surveillance they knock about, at first in the theater, ball room, restaurants, then until a late hour of the night, nay, until an early hour of the following morning, on the streets and the Lord knows where. Alone and unguarded they sit somewhere in a room, or hang around or stand before the door or in the garden. I will not ask, "have they still any respect for each other, or any care for their good name?" A young lady especially, ought to give everything to preserve the spotless character of her honor, and rather lose all than her fair name. But girls who act in the manner I have described, call forth against themselves the worst suspicions. They have no just claim to be regarded by others as really honorable young ladies

and cannot complain, if people think and say otherwise. But this does not belong to our subject. I only ask, — is not this remaining together without surveillance the most dangerous occasion of sin, and therefore, sinful? Are the two of whom we speak perhaps a couple of angels without flesh or blood? No. They are young people in whom the fire of concupiscence glows the more fiercely, in as much as they are more youthful and physically more vigorous; hence, the certainty, that the devil who continually surrounds them will at last succeed in pressing into their hands the poisonous cup of sin, becomes the greater, in proportion as it is easier for him to lull their conscience asleep by the empty pretext of impending marriage.

O my God! The Holy Ghost exhorts: "Gaze not upon a maiden, lest her beauty be a stumbling block to thee" (Ecclus 9, 5). And in the book of Genesis (6. ch.) it is expressly stated before the deluge: "the fact that the sons of God, (that is the small number of just), seeing the fair daughters of Eve, kept company with them," was the proximate occasion of those crimes, which the waves of heaven had to wash away from the face of the earth. The pious and patient Job says: "I made a covenant with my eyes that I would not so much as think upon a virgin" (31, 1). And in view of all this our young folks would fancy that they can be hours upon hours alone in each other's company without exposing themselves to the danger of any sin. Pour oil into the fire and tell it not to burn and consume. The three youths remained uninjured in the fiery furnace and sang hymns of praise. Would

the omnipotence of God, who wished to testify to the truth of their faith, have preserved them, if they had cast themselves into the fire in a criminal manner without necessity? This, however, is done by so many young people in their secret meetings. Or, what reason have they for so doing? If they wish to speak and do what God and the Angels and everybody may hear and see, they need not fear the presence of parents and other decent people. This seeking and endeavoring to be alone and unobserved, is already a very strong presumption against purity, and rather a proof that goes to establish the sinfulness of their thoughts and desires, — a proof which cannot be weakened by any manner of excuses. If they really and sincerely love each other and cherish a serious intention of entering very soon into the matrimonial state, accompanied by the blessing of God; if they possess a true respect for each other without which a genuine love cannot exist, then these considerations alone already must compel them to avoid being alone. For this is a proximate occasion of becoming instruments to each other for mutual seduction. Should this happen, the necessary consequence is, that their love will consume itself in the dismal fire of passion, and the feeling of respect will be transformed into that of unqualified contempt. If thereupon they enter into a matrimonial alliance without love and mutual regard, they have knocked the bottom, as it were, out of the tub from the very beginning, and their connubial relations will certainly be most sad and sorrowful.

Young men and young ladies! Contract matri-

mony, if it be God's Holy Will. But heed the pieces of advice I have given you to-day and in my previous discourse. Deliberate beforehand, ask for counsel and, above all things, *pray*, to the end that you may know the Will of God, as to whether you shall choose this state, and in order to find out with what partner He wishes you to walk through life. Avoid every species of love-making which is to no purpose; every kind of courtship, whose hopelessness furnishes you with the palpable proof, that God does not approve of such a union; for if He willed it, His omnipotence and love would provide you with a sure prospect for a speedy realization of the same. Moreover, the duration of the courtship which you begin with a pure intention and a reasonable hope, must be as short as possible. Reflect always during the same that you are never alone, but ever in the presence of God and the Guardian Angels. This thought, more than any other, Satan in his slyness, seeks to remove and destroy. — But this is not enough. Associate with each other freely, openly, honorably in presence of parents, or at least of decent people. If you observe these counsels, you can approach the Altar on the day of your marriage with gladness and joy, because you are pure and innocent. You have saved yourselves for the time of matrimony from many a heartache and, instead of the curse due to sins committed during the period of courtship, insured to yourselves a most bountiful blessing from Heaven.

And you, parents, deliberate and pray with your children. Above all watch over them during the

most dangerous time of their youth with a holy earnestness and, if necessary, with inexorable severity. Parents who take things lightly on this score, who, for instance, stay quietly in a back room, or even retire to sleep whilst their daughter is keeping company in the evening and, until late at night, strolls about away from home, or sits up in the front room, become guilty of a grievous sin and confess unworthily, if they do not accuse themselves thereof, and forthwith seriously and emphatically put an end to the dangerous devil's sport, by insisting firmly that those meetings shall not be held excepting in their parental presence.

A truly Catholic nobleman in a certain city of Germany on the eve of his wedding asked the mother of his intended wife, if he could speak to the latter alone for a few moments. Hitherto during their courtship, which, by the way, was of short duration, they had never been alone together. The mother, a truly pious lady, hesitated a moment and then asked quietly: "Is it necessary?" The young man did not take this question amiss, and added in a friendly manner: "It is not exactly necessary. I only wished to ask my intended, when and where we should go to make our general confession. But just call your daughter in. I can ask her in your presence." — "That's right," replied the mother, who, calling her daughter, communicated to her what the young man was pleased to ask. At the same time she added with tears of joy quivering in her eyes: "With all my heart I impart to you already now my maternal blessing!"

But is such strict conduct, as we have seen in this case, not railed at nowadays as being excessively cautious and decried as impossible? — The Holy Ghost says: "*There is none greater than he that feareth God*" (Eccli. 10, 27). And as for the possibility of carrying out such precaution, the words of the Divine Saviour find an application here as elsewhere: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now (yes, indeed, until NOW) the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away (Matth. 11, 12). Now this violence, which is indispensably necessary, will surely find an immediate field for operation and development in the avoidance of those perils which such courtships almost necessarily entail, as are conducted without purpose, without prospect of marriage, and without supervision. If every parent and all young men and young ladies who are contemplating marriage, should duly consider this and act accordingly, then, certainly, malediction and misery a thousand times would be prevented, and a thousand blessings insured, — insured both for parents and children, for time and for eternity. Amen.

## 24. Punishing Children.

> Qui parcit virgae, odit filium ; qui autem diligit illum instanter erudit.
> (Prov. 13, 24).
>
> "He that spareth the rod, hateth his son ; but he that loveth him, correcteth him betimes."

Thus far we have given in our discourses many a hint and counsel for the benefit of parents, whose first two and chief obligations, as we have seen, are : — acquainting their children with the Christian religion, which is the only way to Heaven ; and then — universal and constant watchfulness as to the interior and exterior dangers prepared for them by corrupt nature, the world and Satan, who seek to entice them away from the straight path to Heaven into sin and perdition. Should there be any one who thinks that I dwell too long on this subject, I would quote the consoling words of St. John Chrysostom who one day exclaimed to his hearers : "The chief concern is to educate children. Woe to me! Because I speak to you constantly on this subject, it may seem to you as though I were foolish ; but, in spite of all, I shall not desist to perform my duty." Wherefore, confiding in the assistance of the Divine Lover of the little ones and the help of the Heavenly Mother, we also shall continue our series of

discourses. And now we come to the third principal duty of parents, namely that of prodding or goading on children, as it were, on the way to Heaven by *administering occasionally a judicious punishment.*

Let us see to-day:

1. the duty of punishing, of chastising children and
2. some of the excuses and objections against so doing.

1. The duty of parents to punish their children, is gathered, in the first place, from those unmistakable words of Holy Scripture in which the Heavenly Father, who is assuredly the best and wisest educator, gives parents certain rules and principles, which they are to follow in educating those who are His, as well as their children. Let me mention but a few instances. The words of our text — *He that spareth the rod, hateth his son* etc. — must be clear. Now, are you allowed to hate your children? Never! But you hate them when you spare the rod. Must you not love them? Most assuredly! Now you love your children only when an occasional serious punishment emphasizes the work of educating. Equally clear are the words which we read in the book of Proverbs (23, V. 13): Withhold not correction from a child, for if thou strike him with the rod, he shall not die . . . . . thou shalt deliver his soul from hell. — And in the book of Ecclesiasticus (7. 25, 26), the same Lord God exhorts: Hast thou children? Instruct them, and bow down their neck from their childhood. Hast thou daughters? — have a care

of their body (*i. e.* preserve them in purity) and show not thy countenance gay towards them, *i. e.* be not too indulgent with their faults. In the 30. chapter the same holy writer gives, as it were, a perfect system of pedagogy, in which the directions for the punishment of children occupy the first place. Thus, to instance only a few passages, he says: He that loveth his son, frequently chastiseth him . . . . Laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow, and at the last thy teeth be set on edge. Give him not liberty in his youth . . . . Bow down his neck while he is young and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn, and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee.

From these words of the Old Testament, is it not as clear as the noonday sun, that Christian parents must look upon it as their bounden duty to punish their children! The same injunction is given them by St. Paul (Eph. 6, 4): "Bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord." These words also mention the example of the Heavenly Father as an additional proof of the same duty. We all are His children whom He seeks to bring up for Heaven without exception. Considered fundamentally all his exertion in our behalf is nothing else than *educational activity.* Naturally, this activity embraces various means and ways. But one of the most efficacious, if not the most effective means His love and wisdom found, is chastising especially those among his children whom He foreknew, and therefore also predestined to be made conformable to His Only Begotten Son (Rom. 8, 29), who desired to be

punished and chastised by the same Father for our sake. For St. Paul says expressly (Hebr. 12, 6): "Whom God loveth, He chastiseth and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. Persevere under discipline. God dealeth with you as with His sons; for what son is there whom the father doth not correct?" True, the Heavenly Father does not make use of a rod or switch when He determines to chasten you. But sickness, misfortune, reverses in business and employment, interior trials occasioned by wicked people, all of which and many other trials and sufferings God permits or decrees to come directly over you, — inflict, as you will soon find, a far deeper suffering than the most painful stripes. God does not visit you with greater punishment than you can bear, but only with so much as you stand in need of to prepare yourself for Heaven. Now parents are the immediate representatives of God. Should they not then also follow his example in punishing and disciplining their children? Has not the Apostle a right to put the question: "What son is there whom the father doth not correct?" — If God did not punish us, if He spared us from the light and quickly passing sorrow of tribulation, He would not be a wise and loving Father, but a cruel Lord. Parents who do not correct their children, are such cruel masters, yea, they are enemies of their own flesh and blood. By neglecting to comply with such duty, they often commit more grievous sins than they may be aware of.

Finally, this duty is gathered from a consideration of the entire being of the child, as constituted

in consequence of the natural birth by its parents and in view of its regeneration through baptism. The child has actually been born again unto Heaven through baptism, and, by possessing sanctifying grace, bears within its bosom the title to a kingdom in eternity. But in the selfsame child — what a debasement is noticeable beside its dignity! What a misery in company with its blessedness! Owing to original sin, its intellect has been darkened, above all, as to every supersensible, supernatural truth. The will has become slothful and weak in desiring what is good; even the lower faculties through which the soul, as it were, comes in contact with the body, are animated with base propensities and passions; these strive to drag the will away from what is good and noble, and cast it into everything that is earthy, vulgar and smutty. Thus the poor little infant, when born into this world, must face immediately, during the years of its infancy and childhood, a struggle, which is far more dangerous than the fight of a single soldier against a powerful army. In order that in its helplessness it may not be exposed to certain perdition, the Heavenly Father entrusted it wholly and entirely to the care of its parents. Now the parents, above all, are obliged to give to the darkened understanding of the child the only true enlightenment, by a thorough instruction in the Christian Religion. The duties which they have in this regard as to house and school, Christian doctrine and sermon, we have already considered.

And now what are their duties in regard to the

*will* of the child? The will, when filled with sloth and indolence towards all that is good, must be goaded on, its pride will have to be broken and accustomed to the yoke of obedience; sensuality, with its entire host of base desires, must be checked and overcome.

Behold a fiery steed under the management of its rider! It would like to plunge to the right and to the left, over stock and stone, until perhaps both horse and rider should be hurled into perdition. What keeps the charger on a straight and safe track? The tight lines in the hand of the rider. The charger may chafe and bite his tongue even unto blood, he may foam and snort, — it will all be in vain, he must keep in the road which the rider assigns to him.

Now, by getting accustomed to the rein, he becomes a useful animal and may yet develop into a celebrated trotter. Unless the horse is trained, he will eventually become unfit for anything except to be shot. Or perhaps the horse has some other fault; he takes spells of throwing himself to the ground, rearing and balking. In this case the rider strikes his spurs into the horse's flanks, gives him a taste of the whip, and thus directs the animal either to walk or run.

It is the Holy Spirit Himself Who makes use of the same example, in order to bring home to parents the necessity of disciplining their children. In the chapter of Ecclus., cited above, Jesus, the son of Sirach, says (v. 8 and 9): "A horse not broken, becometh stubborn, and a child left to himself, will become head-strong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee sorrowful."

Education by means of a wise discipline, therefore, is a sacred obligation of parents. This duty is not only inculcated by countless, eminently clear and most pointed passages of Holy Writ, which, consequently, are inspired by the Holy Ghost, but it is also demanded by the very nature of the child, corrupted as it has been through original sin and ever since inclined to evil. Wherefore, to neglect this duty, is to commit a sin, which they must answer before God.

2. *And here excuses count for nothing.* Or can parents say: "The child is too young, too tender!" Of course, you are not allowed to lay it on to the youngster with a flail, and therefore, you are not to do what so many parents often foolishly threaten: "Just wait, I'll break every bone in your body." Precisely because the child is as yet young and tender, it feels a proper punishment all the more readily and keenly, and then later on perhaps will not need any correction at all. Alban Stolz and others well versed in pedagogics, are of opinion that one can and should begin to discipline children after they have completed their first year or already during the same. It is certainly very much to be regretted, that many parents, especially mothers in their blindness, are truly inventive and indefatigable in discovering means how to pacify a bawling, kicking youngster with all kinds of little caresses and goodies, or by rocking and carrying him around for hours. They do not even notice that thus they only assist in developing his stubbornness and self-will, nay the first germs of sensuality, whilst a slight punishment would

have sufficed to choke or, at least, to check these bad qualities. Does perhaps the gardener wait until the sapling, which has started to grow bent and crooked, has developed into a strong tree, before he firmly ties it up and forces it to grow straight? Does he delay to pick out of his flower bed the tiny weeds and parasitic plants, until these, by their luxuriant growth, shall have choked the tender germs of his little flowers?

"But the youngster cries and bawls so dreadfully, if I should undertake to punish him."—Well, to shout lustily, serves to expand the lungs and enlarge the chest; besides, tears are a sort of bitter salt, which is quite healthful. Think but of the words of the Holy Spirit which we quoted heretofore: "If thou strike thy child with the rod, he shall not die" (Prov. 23, 13). There is hardly anything which does greater injury to the education of children, than that false, and at the present day ever increasing sentimentality, which would like to banish from family and school every kind of corporal punishment. At all events, be firmly convinced that the few tear-drops, shed in childhood, will save you and your children in later life very many and exceedingly bitter tears, and according to the assurance of the Holy Ghost, you shall, by *beating your child with the rod, deliver his soul from hell* (Prov. 23, 14).

"But the child does not yet understand the punishment." Nor is this at all necessary. For present purposes it is perfectly sufficient that it should *feel* the punishment. This feeling of pain which the body experiences, is transmitted, as it were, to the

soul and evokes therein the thought of the fault committed, for which the punishment was inflicted; and thus the fear of a repetition of the punishment, causes the child to recoil from committing any similar misdemeanor. This is a natural consequence of the intimate connection existing between the body and soul of the child. All the faculties of his soul must be awakened, as it were, by corporal, sensible impressions from without. If the body feel the pain of chastisement inflicted in consequence of the commission of a specified fault, the pain will awaken in the soul at first an inkling, then later on, the acknowledgment of the failing, and, with it, at the same time in the will a resolve not to commit the fault again, so as not to have to suffer the same pain. In this way the purpose of correction is attained. The bare inquiry — "Would you make the acquaintance of the rod again?" — very often suffices thereafter to keep the youngster in order.

"But my children are already too old and tall; I cannot punish them any more." — Ordinarily, no children whatever are too old or too big to be punished, as long as they are at home under parental control. Besides, there are, as we shall yet see, still other ways of correcting grown up children, than by laying it on to them with a rod or stick. Finally, a pedagogical principle, confirmed by experience, applies to all such children, to wit, that if children after their twelfth or thirteenth year, still stand in need of corporal punishment, it is a proof, that parents in previous years have either neglected altogether the obligation of

punishing them, or exercised it in an imprudent manner. If parents follow the injunction of the Holy Spirit, "*Bow down the neck of thy son while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child*" — children, when they are grown up, will never resist their parents in stiff-necked stubbornness. A word, a sign, a mere frown will keep them within bounds. If parents spare the rod in childhood, the children themselves shall yet grow to be a rod for their parents: the reason is that the fourth commandment with all its duties for children and parents, stands under the care of Him, who hath power to reach all with his arm either dispensing blessing, or inflicting punishment. (1. Kgs., ch. 2., v. 3).

As to *examples* which demonstrate palpably, so to speak, the necessity of punishing children, they are by no means wanting in common life. A juvenile murderer was condemned to death. Shortly before his execution his mother received permission to visit him in prison. Anxious to embrace her son, she hastened towards him. He repelled her with the crushing charge, saying: "Mother, had you punished me when I brought to your house the first egg, I stole, I should not have to lay my head now under the executioner's ax." — I do not wish to adduce from every-day life still more, well authenticated examples. Let me only remind you still of the high-priest Heli. Again and again he had to hear from the people what sins and crimes his sons Ophni and Phineas had committed even in the sanctuary. Yet, he did not punish them. All he succeeded in doing was to make a weak admonition and request (1. Kings 2,

23, 24). Thereupon God sends a prophet to Heli and informs him: "*I shall take away from thy family the dignity of the high-priest; none of thy descendants shall attain an honorable old age; they all shall sink so deep as to be obliged to beg for a piece of bread.*" Heli hears the words, he neglects them, and permits his sons to continue as heretofore. At this pass, Samuel must make known to him the impending visitation of God (1. Kings, 3, 11): "*Behold I do a thing in Israel, and whosoever shall hear it, both his ears shall tingle. In that day I will raise up against Heli all things I have spoken concerning his house; I will begin and make an end. For I have foretold unto him, that I will judge his house for ever for iniquity, because he knew that his sons did wickedly and did not chastise them. Therefore have I sworn to the house of Heli, that the iniquity of his house shall not be expiated with victims nor offerings for ever.*" And He fulfilled His threats. Soon after Heli's two sons fell in open battle against the Philistines. In punishment of their sins and the criminal indulgence of their father, Israel suffers a terrible defeat. Three thousand Jews remain on the field of battle. The ark of the covenant falls into the hands of the enemy. Heli, being ninety-eight years of age, stayed at home. When he heard from the mouth of an Israelite, who had escaped the general massacre, the sorrowful news of the death of his sons, of the complete rout of the people, of the loss of Jehovah's sacred treasure, he fell in deadly terror backward from his chair, broke his neck and died.

Now what does this example teach us? The High-priest of the Old Law, who otherwise was a

very pious, venerable old man, sins in the sight of God by being too indulgent towards his sons. He admonishes, entreats, chides, conjures them repeatedly. But — he fails to punish them ! And for the simple reason that he was aware of his sons' bad behavior and did not discipline them, he himself is punished. People speak of classical passages and examples. Heli and his sons are more than a classical example. They are, so to speak, the avenging judgment of God, passed by the Almighty Himself, recorded by the hand of the Most High, proclaimed by Divine lips; a judgment which awaits all those parents who do not endeavor to restrain their children from sin by necessary correction. This doctrine was well understood and followed by a certain father who lived in Catholic Westphalia. His son, a lad of twelve years, not seldom went so far in a freak of forwardness as to break through the bounds of strict obedience. Having repeatedly, but in vain, admonished him, the father addressed these words to him one day: "You know, that I do not like to use the rod on you. But now remember, if you get into one more scrape, your measure will be full." It did not last three days and he was deep in another scrape, which consisted in having gone skating in spite of an express order to the contrary, and neglecting his school tasks. In the evening the father remarked very quietly: "I see you cannot learn to obey without punishment; you will, therefore, copy the history of Heli and his sons and bring the same to me tomorrow, nicely written and without mistakes." With a light heart, for he had expected a much

severer correction, the son at once set to work to perform the punishment and brought the task to his father early next morning. The latter read it and remarked saying: "It is written very nicely." — ("Therefore the son received praise in place of punishment?" you will say. Patience!) Glancing from the copy to the son, the father said: "Now also tell me the application to be drawn from the history of Heli." The son made no answer. The father proceeded: "Then I will explain it to you. If you are not corrected in the midst of your bad behavior with all earnestness, you will become as good-for-nothing as were Heli's sons; and if I as your father should only admonish you and spare the rod on you, God will punish me for it one day. It cannot be that you would have either of these results to come to pass." Thereupon, taking very quietly the rattan rod out of its corner, he gave his son a thorough flogging and closed with these words: "I hope that this will be the last time that you cause me the pain of being compelled to chastise you in such a manner." And in truth, the son who was thus punished and who in later years in the full maturity of manhood narrated in a Catholic weekly the manner in which his parent proceeded, closes his account with the assurance, that never thereafter had his father to resort to chastisement.

Christian parents! I beseech and conjure you, spare not the rod! Train your children in the discipline of the Lord! Unless you do this, the Lord of heaven and earth will say to you: I shall do a thing to you and your children, so that who-

soever shall hear it, both their ears shall tingle. It is possible, that you and your children may not yet have to taste the avenging rod of the Almighty already in this world, at least not in such a striking and palpable manner as Heli. Yet, with God the principle obtains, that whatever has been deferred, has not been forgotten. His time for punishment is above all in eternity. And as for the present life, you may expect a merciful judgment only if you live in strict subjection to the Lord yourselves, and bring up your children in the same discipline according to His oft-repeated, clear and emphatic admonition. Amen.

## 25. Concerning the Neglect of the Obligation to punish Children.

Deus quem diligit, castigat, flagellat autem omnem filium quem recipit. Hebr. 12, 6.

"Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

The great life work which parents have received from the Almighty, is to lead back to Heaven the children whom God has entrusted to them. This entails serious obligations. The third duty of parents is, that they give the necessary emphasis to their *instruction* and *vigilance* by administering *judicious punishment* and thus urge children forward on the path to Heaven. This duty, — I repeat — *this duty*, to administer punishment, is enjoined on parents by a great many and *very clear* and *unmistakable passages of Holy Scripture*. It is illustrated by the *example* of the Heavenly Father Himself, for if He, truly the wisest and most loving of educators, trains us, His children, unto heaven, by *chastising whom he loveth and scourging every son whom He receiveth:* it must be evident that parents on this earth are only then true parents and only then love their children in deed, if they punish them according to the example of the

Heavenly Father. Finally, parents must do so also for this reason, that they may *heal and help along by wholesome discipline human nature which has been corrupted through original sin.* The spur of discipline must goad on the will which is so slothful; like a tightly pulled rein it must curb that self-will which is so prone to stubbornness and disobedience, and that sensuality which ever hankers after sinful gratification, thus holding them within the necessary bounds of obedience, temperance and purity. In a word, it is the duty of parents to punish their children, and, therefore, the neglect of this duty is criminal. As the shadow accompanies the body, so punishment follows sin. A warning example for all parents is the weak, indulgent Heli with his sons who were spoiled by his over-indulgence. Children who are not disciplined, as a rule, grow up to be a source of most painful chagrin and punishment, — a most smarting rod for their own parents already in the present life; but unspeakably heavier shall the rod of God's vengeance strike father and mother in eternity. In order to preserve you, my dear friends, from such a misfortune, let us look about a little in this every-day life and see how many parents become guilty of the sin of gross omission when they ought to punish their children.

1. To begin, there are, for instance, mothers who almost always give in to the whims and peevish desires of their little ones, even the smallest, ever seeking to please them. I do not say, the mother shall be hard and cruel when the child is sick or ailing. The latter condition is soon ascertained by the knowing eye of a mother. But only

too often does it happen, that there is nothing the matter with the child. It only desires to have its own will. During the first, second and third year, stubbornness makes the little one hold up its diminutive head. It would have this or that toy, this or that eatable. The means it employs to reach its end are: crying, screaming, striking and kicking. Woe betide, should it find out that they are effectual, that is to say, if it observes how the mother hastens immediately, or, after a short but useless hesitation, to satisfy its whims of forwardness; the youngster will soon become a hardheaded pouter and the mother a miserable slave who deserves to be punished.

Were it not too sad, one might almost laugh when observing how some mothers, through ignorance or mistaken affection, really lower themselves to become the actual slaves of their children. *Patience* and *meekness* especially on the part of mothers, as we have shown in the sixteenth discourse, are certainly an efficacious means to render the parental home very dear to the children and to keep them at home as long as possible. But patience and meekness must not degenerate into weakness and reckless indulgence. Children, when they are yet young, should learn that they must bow to a will that is above their own; that they are not always permitted to follow their childish whims and freaks, not even in things that are lawful. Even for parents who are the rulers of the little world of children, the maxim holds good: *Be firm in deed, gentle in manner.* And this motto is but a short paraphrase of the wisdom displayed

by Our Heavenly Father who when ruling his children here below, combines *might and strength with mildness* (Wisdom 8, 1). Should this strength be wanting to parents, especially mothers, then not *wisdom*, but *folly* will be the guiding principle of education, and the little ones even whilst they are yet small, will become very *naughty, ill-trained* children, an unfailing source of domestic grief and a deep disgrace to their parents. But if parents combine *strength* with *gentleness* and *meekness* they will carry out at the right time the suggestion of the Holy Ghost: *Bow down thy child's neck while he is young and beat his sides while he is a child* (Ecclus. 30, 12). Hence they will oppose their children's whims and wishes, should these become excessive, and especially if they detect in them the least self-will, with a plain, short "*no*", but a *no* which cannot be undone either by coaxing or by crying and bawling. And should it seem as though the crying and bawling would not come to an end, then take the rod, so that the child may get a palpable reason for crying. On a second or third recurrence the youngster will be on his guard, so that the mother need but glance at him seriously or ask: "Do you want the rod again?" — and the child's obstinacy and sensuality are broken. More than once did adult persons own and admit to me saying: "I received stripes but once in tender infancy, and yet to this day I am grateful for them to my parents who are in their graves. Later on a mere glance, a single word, was sufficient to break my stubbornness and to curb my sensuality." Indeed, there are parents who never need administer a punish-

ment or a whipping. They are of course those who have learnt in the school of Divine Wisdom how to combine severity with gentleness.

Also in regard to children who are grown up, parents but too often sin by omitting a due punishment, which must not necessarily consist in stripes but may fittingly be a refusal of some favor asked. While the boy or the girl of fourteen, twenty, or twenty-four years may not be precisely the very pink of diligence and piety and obedience, still they are not yet so far gone that they would dare to seek this or that pleasure without or against the wish and consent of their parents or in open defiance of parental authority.

Now it happens that some day such an occasion offers itself; it is a dance, a ball, a family gathering. The boys and girls forthwith fairly deluge their parents with: "Let me go there! Let me go there! Such and such neighbors, friends and relatives are also going. They all, surely, are good boys and girls. I am not permitted to go anywhere. I will come home early!" This is kept up for days, from early morning till late at night. Father and mother see quite well, what they ought and must do in such a case. They are obliged to watch over the amusements of their children and never to permit them to be without personal, parental supervision. Before God they are obliged to break the obstinacy and self-will of their children even in things that are lawful, therefore still more so in things that are dangerous; and dangerous to religion, piety, innocence are, on an average, all amusements such as young people of both sexes

nowadays partake in without parental surveillance until a late hour of the night. Parents know these their duties. Loudly and openly are they preached to them; reason, conscience, experience compel them to give their assent to what is said in the sermon. If they have not heard the sermon, it is their own fault. They are blind and deaf, because they choose to be blind and deaf. — And mothers, what do they do in our case? — For the sake of living in peace with the son, the young lord, and with the daughter, the young lady, both say, or first the mother, and then after she has talked awhile to him, also the father: "Well, we do not like to give you permission; but this time you may go." And the children go. They laugh as to the phrase "this time;" for they know in advance how they can manage to squeeze out a new permission in about two weeks or a month. And how shall we characterize such conduct on the part of parents? Before the tribunal of reason "a perverted world," — yea a cowardice without character, which degrades parents to the low level of yielding servants to self-willed, obstinate children; but before the judgment seat of God? Criminal omission of an indispensably necessary discipline! Just think of Heli who on account of a similar omission broke his neck!

2. Many fathers become guilty of the same sin of omission in another manner. After being away all day from their home, they return in the evening tired and fatigued. They now want to have their rest, do not care or bother themselves with the children. After a hurried supper, which is the

only time when they see their children, they desire to be undisturbed to smoke their pipe, to read the newspaper, if they should not prefer to go out and look up this or that company. Meanwhile, the poor mother had to plague herself all day with the children. Much did she see during that time that deserved punishment. Repeatedly, too, did she threaten: "Just wait, I'll tell your father!" And now when the father is at home, she does not tell him after all. Why not? At first, she had actually requested the husband a few times to assert his authority by administering a punishment on the offending ones. But then the father said, and that too before his children: "Let me in peace! I must plague myself enough to earn bread for you folks. As to caring for the children, that is your concern. Do with them as you please." Or also, if she told the father about the faults of the children which deserved punishment, all he did at the time, was to indulge in a sort of verbal hail and thunderstorm and general abuse. The poor mother is aware of this. Therefore she prefers to be silent and manages to pull through as best she can, or rather, however badly she may fare. And things always go badly in such a family, because the children grow up without being disciplined and corrected by their father who is the head of the family and in whom the principal authority to punish resides.

3. Moreover, speaking of the correction of children, another fault must be considered which does a vast deal of harm, though it occurs but seldom. It consists in this that the parents seek to *prevent, criticize,* or *render fruitless the punishment* of the child

*either among themselves*, or else *in regard to the school*. Thus *e. g.* — to begin with the school — the boy, the girl, for continued laziness, misbehavior, impertinent obstinacy, received a punishment from the teacher. The child did not die in consequence; nor did it sustain any wounds or bodily injury. The teachers, being well-versed in the difficult art of educating, owing to varied experience and a long practice in teaching, have administered to the child, which was afflicted with some ailment of the soul, a somewhat bitter medicine, — rather unpalatable to the body, but very wholesome for the soul. Now the boy, who was thus punished, comes home. At school, perhaps, he scarcely winced; at home he begins to bawl with all his might. From amidst his wailing these words break forth spasmodically: "The teacher half killed me! And yet I was altogether innocent; — didn't do anything, — knew my lesson quite well; — such and such a boy deserved a whipping; but the teacher never punishes him, — only me; — he always has something against me!" — And now what about the father, or still oftener, what about the mother who usually wishes to be so smart. First they chide and scold in presence of the children at home to their heart's content, that is to say, in this connection, to the joy of hell and the sorrow of heaven, about the teacher and the priest who backs the teacher. Loudly they clamor, so that the whole neighborhood can hear them: "Our child is an angel, — diligence and piety personified. He does not lie; he never pilfered nor stole anything." I shall not inquire what the Guardian Angel might

remark in reply to such a panegyric. Most probably just the reverse, point for point. But let that pass. After the tongue has grown tired at home, the custom is to strike out, with the boy at one's heels, for the priest's house. The poor priest must now suffer himself to be subjected to a second edition of the long torrent of loquacity augmented with a decidedly peppery addition. This, at last, finds its termination in a threat: "If this thing is to continue, I will take my boy away altogether and not send him at all any more, — or to the public school." Do not think my description is an idle fiction. If we priests would keep a written account of all we get to hear from parents in regard to the correction of children at school, we should have a very long document at our disposal containing abundant argument, whereby to show, that very many parents destroy the efforts of the school in behalf of the education of their children entirely, because by scolding about the necessary punishment imposed at school, they undermine the authority of the school. However, by doing so, they also ruin their own authority and soon find out, that they are preparing in the children whom they do not wished to be punished at school, an exceedingly sharp and cutting rod, which will be used to chastise their own backs in the near future. It matters not whether their conduct is to be ascribed to ignorance or malice; they will soon experience the bitter consequences thereof. In this regard, how commendable is the conduct of other parents, especially fathers. Their children do not breathe a word about the punishment which, may-

be, they have received at school; they beg their brothers and sisters and neighboring children not to let those at home know anything about the punishment; for they know but too well: should the father hear that they received, say ten strokes from the teacher, then they would get twenty to boot from his own hand, and besides, well salted and peppered. They have no desire for such a high rate of interest, and, therefore, content themselves with the original capital invested.

They say that mothers above all are given to criticizing the punishment administered in school; whether this be true or not, we shall not examine. However, I should like to hold before them, as if it were a mirror, an example which a priest narrated of his early school days.

In a certain city on the Rhine a boy had stolen apples out of a neighbor's orchard. As a punishment, the teacher an experienced man, made him stay after school and go without a dinner. Shortly after the school had begun in the afternoon, a rap came at the door, and in comes the mother of our petty thief, carrying a stout stick in her hand. "Teacher," said she with a voice quivering from sorrow, "I heard my Peter stole apples and, in consequence, had to stay in. Where is he?" Peter knew the ways of his mother and surmised what was coming. With fear and trembling he slowly approached. Seizing her boy firmly by the arm the mother turned towards the teacher and said: "Will you permit me to whip him here before the eyes of his comrades?" "Oh certainly, with pleasure." replied the venerable teacher whose eyes began to glisten with gladness.

The priest then continues his narrative and concludes it with the following words: "You could hear a pin drop so quiet did the schoolroom grow; the stillness was interrupted only by the whacks and weeping of the boy. At the time I sat in the first bench and clearly observed the big tears coursing down the cheeks of the mother shed by her, no doubt, from a feeling of pain and disgrace at the viciousness of her offspring. But upon us children the scene made the deepest impression; as often as I met that lady on the street in leater years, I would look up with holy awe and reverence to this woman who regarded and also fulfilled her duty as a mother with such earnestness.

Fathers and mothers can fail in the obligation to correct their children at home, by preventing the punishment which has become necessary, or by criticizing, or subsequently rendering it ineffectual. Thus, for example, the father is about to administer a punishment to the stubborn boy or the impertinent girl; the mother secretly tells the child: "Quick, run away." She hides the child and tells a lie to the father saying, that she does not know where it is. Or perhaps, the father is already in the act of punishing; then the mother rushes on his arm and seeks to wrest the stick or rod from his hand. In this case heaven scarce would frown were the mother, the woman, to receive the strokes from which in her blind ape-like love she sought to preserve the youngster.

Or, maybe, the mother punishes the children because the father alas, fails to do it. Forthwith the children begin to cry and bawl. This disturbs

the father in his nap or reading the newspaper, or discussing either in word or writing the all-important affairs of state, such as unjust taxation or an impending campaign.

Sullenly he calls out to the mother, so that the children hear it: "Stop your everlasting punishing! I will have rest, and desire to be undisturbed." And the children despise their mother, perhaps, to such an extent, as to exclaim to her when she would whip them: "You just wait, I'll tell pa!"

Suppose a case where there are *step children.* Such children must be punished and disciplined just as well as your own children. Yea, often still more when, for example, they are wanting in necessary respect and obedience towards the step father or step mother. For, before God there is no difference, generally speaking, between step parents and one's right parents. Duties and responsibility are the same with both. It is to be regretted that this is but too often overlooked, as, in general, so also in our case. The step father or the step mother punish the child, because it has deserved a correction. But then the right father or the right mother interferes and with them the whole kit of cousins and aunts who are related to the step child, and they whisper and talk and clamor and hollow: "Of course, they are step children! The step father or the step mother has no heart for them!" Such a remark cuts the step parent to the quick. Not to be decried still more as hard and cruel, they do not chastise them at all in future. The education of the step child will prove a failure just as surely as an untrimmed vine will shoot up into wild and fruitless wood.

4. Finally I must still mention a fault that does not occur so very seldom either, by which namely the mother spoils the good effect of a punishment given by the father, or, also, vice versa,— this latter, however, being more rarely the case. — Little Charlie was four years of age, but quite a cunning young chap. One day he came running with the switch in his hand to his father who sat busily engaged at his desk, and said to him: "Papa, please whip me a little." "What for? You have not, I am sure, been naughty just now?" — "Certainly not, papa; but you see, if you whip me a little, then I'll cry very loud, and then mamma will call me and give me some sugar so that I should stop crying." This true little story — though with less drollery—repeats itself in many a family. The punishment administered effectively by the father is subsequently spoilt and deprived of its fruit through the foolish ape-like love of the mother. Instead of helping the father, by ever praising the punishment as just, yea as springing from actual love, and instead of strewing, as it were, into the soil of the child's heart, softened by the hand of the father, the seed of earnest admonition, the mother spoils all and undermines the authority of the father by her pettings, distributing of sweetmeats and by her caresses. Such conduct is not love, but downright cruelty towards the child. We shall see this still more clearly when we consider the properties a punishment should have, and the manner in which it must be administered.

One conviction, I hope to God, you O parents, will take to your homes from this and the foregoing

sermon, viz., the conviction that you are *bound before God and your conscience to bring up your children by wisely disciplining and correcting them.* Only then do you love your children sincerely; only in this manner do you effectively care for their temporal and eternal welfare as well as your own. Only then will you follow the example of the Heavenly Father, who "*chastiseth whom He loveth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.*" Amen.

## 26. What Parents ought to do before Administering Punishment to their Children.

> Doce filium tuum et operare in illo, ne in turpitudinem illius offendas. Eccl. 30, 13.
>
> "Instruct thy son, and labor about him, lest his lewd behavior be an offence to thee."

The duty of parents to punish their children, cannot be denied, any more than the obligation which they have of instructing them in religion and piety and of preserving them from seduction by constant watchfulness. Not to punish one's children, is, therefore, a considerable sin of omission. It is to be regretted only the more by every one who sincerely loves parents and children, that there are so many cases of sins of omission of this kind, as we have partially seen in our last discourse.

Now while there are some parents who become guilty of sin because they do not punish at all, there are still far more others, who, by the *manner* in which they administer punishment, spoil entirely its fruit, and actually, if anything, make things rather worse than better. Here, above all, the saying obtains: As your discipline is, so will be its fruit. Let me, then, give you a few suggestions as

to the manner in which you are to administer punishment.

In the first place I say:

1. Pray.
2. Observe the right order in which you are to impart punishment.

1. Yes, indeed, pray with and for your children, in order to prevent punishing, and offer a prayer for your ownselves when you are about to administer punishment.

Pray with and for your little ones. If the tender child of two, three or four years says its little prayers to Jesus, Mary, to the Guardian Angel regularly; if it hears again and again, whilst its attention is appropriately directed to some religious representation: "God, Jesus, Mary, the Guardian Angel are always with you and hear and see all; when you are naughty you make them feel sad, and then they cannot love you, but must punish you"—: in this case such a tender, but strong conviction, strengthened by the grace which is implored by short little prayers, suffices in most instances to preserve the child from faults which really deserve punishment. The Holy Ghost says: "*Godliness is profitable to all things*" (I. Tim. 4, 8.) Piety which induces parents to pray much for their children, and which they implant into their pliant heart, is profitable in as much as it renders chastisement superfluous in most cases. Punishment will ever remain a bitter medicine, destined to check and heal the diseases, defects and sins of the soul, into which the child has actually fallen. It is much better, however, and as a rule also much

easier to prevent a disease when it threatens, than to expel the same after it has laid hold of anyone. But godliness preserves the child from punishable misdemeanor in an easy and agreeable manner. This is an important point for parents, especially for the mother. Women possess by nature, that is to say, through a special gift of the Creator, more inclination to piety than men. Celebrated authors, well versed in pedagogy like Alban Stolz, recognize in this inclination a special providence on the part of the Heavenly Father in favor of the little ones. The religious and moral education of the child is begun as to its foundation, nay even built up, as has already been said, during the first six or seven years of life. During these years it depends principally, almost solely, on the mother.

For this reason the Heavenly Father wished to secure to the tender soul of the child an early development in godliness, *by implanting into the heart of the mother a special propensity to piety.* This propensity shall induce and enable the mother to impart her interior complexion or disposition to the child, and thus to draw it along towards God, up to heaven. If she does this, the child needs little or no punishment at all, to be spurred onward and upward. But if she does not do so, that is to say, if the mother should be deficient in godliness and be given to worldliness — and this she is and remains as a rule, if she has been so as a girl — then, says Alban Stolz, it were better if she had been sunk with a millstone about her neck into the depth of the sea, rather than that she should have become a mother. This word is not too severe, for here

there is question of the salvation of children and of heaven. And this salvation is rendered far safer by prayer and a religious education during the first years of infancy, than by countless thrashings, which later on are to make good again the neglect of an early training in piety. Wherefore, O parents, remember, the first rule in the matter of punishing children is: Train them in tenderest infancy to genuine piety, if you wish to anticipate and make punishment unnecessary. Pray with them, and for them and teach them to pray by word and example.

In consequence of the corruption of nature, however, and the influence of bad examples round about them, it will happen after all, that you will have to punish your children Here, too, I say: *Pray for yourselves before and when you must administer a punishment.* The punishment is to be a medicine for the diseased soul of the child. If the physician shall prescribe a truly wholesome medicine for the distemper of the body, he must possess a reliable faculty of diagnosing, of ascertaining from amongst different remedies the right specific and imparting, as to its application, the necessary directions; all of which the physician learns by much and long continued study, observation and constant experience. Parents lack, especially during the first years, those natural means and aids to acquire the most difficult art, namely, to look, as it were, into the ailing soul of the child, to find the right remedy and to apply the same. Now here God readily comes to their aid, provided they *pray* to Him for enlightenment whenever they are about to punish

their children. If they do not pray, they will soon find out, that all their punishing remains without effect, because it lacks the blessing of God; on the contrary, if they pray, they will soon experience with joy, that the slightest correction operates good and lasting improvement. I have known parents (and teachers as well), who almost always made the sign of the cross before every necessary punishment of the child, recited the Hail Mary, and also caused the child which they were about to punish, to pray along. Such procedure put both into the right frame of mind, viz. the parents, so that they administered the punishment not in anger and passion, but in a spirit of love; and the children, so that they accepted the chastisement with the right knowledge and intention to make some atonement for the faults committed, and with a firm resolve to beware of falling back into such punishable faults in future. It were then also not necessary that parents of this kind should inflict much, frequent or heavy punishment. The grace implored from above through prayer, would make this bitter medicine, after applying it once or twice, highly efficacious for a long period of time, often for ever.

You see dear parents, ever and anon in the course of instructions to you we always again come back to the necessity of prayer and piety. Do not feel surprised at this; the reason is that by prayer and godliness you fulfil, in the very best manner, even the duty of administering punishment; for the graces implored through your prayer and the piety which you have instilled into the little ones' heart, shall prevent very many faults

deserving of chastisement among children, so that you need not deal out punishment. And if, notwithstanding, such faults should occur, then again prayer, and prayer alone, must come to your assistance, to the end, that the punishment which you have imparted, may receive blessing and fruit from God. Therefore, also in regard to the punishment of children, the words come true: *Godliness is profitable to all things.*

2. Let me add yet a few hints as to the order, or succession which parents have to observe when it becomes necessary to deal out punishment. First must come reproof, reprimand, then the threat of a punishment, and after both have availed nothing, the execution of the same. Therefore, rebuke and reprimand in the first place. In the beginning you must instruct the child, awaken its conscience, bring it to a self-conviction, that it has committed a fault and, therefore, deserves punishment. If this be not done, if parents immediately deal out blows, the child often will not even know why it is punished, and, therefore, ask not without reason: "What have I done?" Consequently, it considers the punishment unjust, takes it to be an outburst of bad humor on the part of parents, is embittered thereby and not changed for the better. Rebuke and reprimand must not be given, except when *actual faults* are committed, not when little tricks or mishaps occur, which among children are the natural result of a want of experience and instruction. Parents who are in the habit of chiding, should the child happen to fall, break something, tear or soil its clothes, or make more

noise than is necessary at play, — are unreasonable, nay cruel: because they require of the little ones more than may justly be expected. And it is exactly such parents — and here you can see how perverted the world is! — who very often do not give even the shadow of a rebuke or reproof to the child when it lies, pilfers, is quarrelsome and stubborn! The reprimand, moreover, must be *short* and *concise*. One word of rebuke, nay very often a single look of reproach, a cold distant manner of acting, is more effectual than long-winded, ranting sermons. These latter when continued and repeated day after day and often hour after hour, are often the cause that especially mothers who are given to much reproachful loquacity, lose all influence over their children, while on the contrary a quiet, serious-mannered father can keep the little crowd in order by a mere word, by a single look.

A reprimand, furthermore, must not violate, much less destroy the sense of honor in children, because this latter is indispensably necessary to the youthful soul in order to aspire to a higher morality. Hence, the rebuke for actual faults, such as lying, stealing, immodest conduct, should not be given in presence of others, not even before brothers and sisters, but in private. It is, moreover, highly harmful, if parents while giving a rebuke, do not allow one good fiber to remain on the child, but call it the worst and most wicked of all children, a veritable extract of malice. On the contrary tell the child: "You have been otherwise really good, but now you have done wrong. I hope you have only forgotten and allowed yourself to be carried

away on the spur of the moment, and that you will make it all good again." Such a method will have quite a different effect, especially, if you put stress on this reprimand, which is otherwise honorable, by showing yourselves earnest, reticent and reserved towards the child at least for a time; that is to say, until actual amendment has set in. For children who are not as yet entirely spoiled, such a mode of conduct on the part of the parents is the keenest kind of punishment, often brings tears to their eyes, and incites them to a truly heroic effort to rid themselves of their faults.

The reproof should be *seasoned and strengthened with religious suggestions and motives.* If the mother reminds the child when it commits a fault of the Omnipresence of God, of Mary, the Guardian Angel, of purgatory (not of hell when children are guilty of but slight offences); if she leads it before the Crucifix, or a picture of the Sacred Heart and says to the little culprit: "What have you done? Jesus had to suffer so . . . much for your sins; they are thorns which you thrust, as it were, into His Sacred Heart. Come, now we both will kneel down and pray together that Jesus may forgive you and help you not to offend Him again" — if the mother does this she will not have to give a reproof perhaps for a long time thereafter.

When chiding children parents must, most of all, guard against *low, vulgar, insulting epithets*, not to mention downright curses and imprecations. A reproof, quietly given, is like dew or a gentle rain in spring and penetrates into the soil of a child's heart. But reproachful nick names, maledictions

and curses are like hailstones that ruthlessly crush the few good germs which still remain. They are the surest means to spoil children, as experience only too often testifies. Authority, love, confidence, all, all are destroyed by such a treatment.

Besides, parents cannot be too careful when they allow themselves to be carried away by such a violent burst of anger as to call down on their offspring all sorts of evil. Who will guarantee to you that God, the avenger of the fourth commandment, shall not, to your own horror, fulfil your curses? St. Augustine narrates a terrible example. A widow had ten children. One day being exasperated at their evil conduct, she let herself be carried away by her angry passion to such a degree as to curse them. From that moment all ten children began to tremble in their whole body like aspen leaves. Incapable of work they wandered, two and two, throughout the length and breadth of the Roman empire for many years, publishing everywhere that their mother's curse had struck them. Only two of them were healed miraculously at the grave of a martyr. Wherefore, O parents, rebuke, reprimand as you properly may and as you should. This is the first stage of correction, a spiritual punishment, as it were. But you shall not reproach your children in an insulting manner, nor curse them. If neither reproof nor chiding avail anything, then a threat of punishment must be made.

This subject demands a few words more.

In the first place, *do not always threaten at the same time that you command or forbid anything.* If

you treat your children like slaves, they will become slaves. Show that you have confidence in them, awaken their sense of honor and you will lead them more securely than when you always stand in front or behind them with an elevated fist or a raised rod ready to strike. — Furthermore, *do not threaten them with a punishment which would be unreasonable, hard or cruel.* Alas, how often does it occur that threats are made like this: "I'll kill you, — break every bone in your body; I'll whip you so that you shall neither hear nor see any more; I'll chase you out of the house and never let you come back again" — all of which are silly expressions of angry passion. They are absolutely mischievous and spoil children instead of making them better.

Finally, when you have threatened to impose a reasonable punishment, *then also carry it out without mildness or mercy.* Do you know with whom Alban Stolz, the great German author, compares parents who always threaten but never punish? With a man of straw that the gardener puts up in a patch of peas or suspends on his cherry tree to scare off sparrows. At first they fly away frightened at the unwonted sight; but soon they alight on the head of the man of straw and continue to filch peas and cherries as much as ever. In its application, this means that parents who again and again threaten punishment, but never punish in reality, lose all credit and authority with the little ones. For the time being perhaps the children may submit, but only to grow all the more impertinent and insolent in their behavior later on.

You see, Christian parents, even before you arrive at the punishment, properly so called, you have much to do and to observe in order to make it bear fruit. Not without reason is education styled the most difficult of all arts. Indeed, it is so difficult, that natural aptitude and experience are not sufficient. As with all the other duties of education, so it is also with regard to the punishment of children, light and blessing from above must come to your aid. Wherefore, I admonish you again and again: cultivate piety and prayer yourselves, and pray that you may receive at the hands of the Heavenly Father the right understanding of what you are to do, and that blessing which shall not fail of its fruit. Amen.

## 27. Rules to be observed when imposing a Punishment on Children.

> Vos, patres ... educate filios in disciplina et correctione Domini.
> Eph. 6, 4.
>
> "And you fathers ... bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord."

The discipline which you employ in the education of your children, will determine the quality of its fruit. If parents train their little ones in religion and piety, from their tenderest years the gentle zephyr of God's grace will refresh their entire youth. By supernatural strength from within the children will be preserved from most faults and led back all the more readily in case of actual missteps. Truly pious parents save themselves in most cases from the pain of being constrained to force their children onward by means of punishment; and should they be obliged to do so notwithstanding, it is then again the prayer and piety of parents which take away that natural bitterness from this sort of medicine and impart to it a truly healing virtue.

With these supernatural qualities you must then also combine natural prudence and deliberation. These, above all, will be suggested to you *by the order* in which you are to *impose punishment*.

In the first place, a reasonable, well-adapted, short but earnest *reproof* or *reprimand* must awaken the child's conscience. Should this effect no improvement, then a *threat* which is meant seriously, must reenforce it. If both avail nothing, then *actual punishment* must ensue. *He that will not hear must feel; and he that spares the rod, hates his son.*

Let us endeavor to comprise the most important moments concerning this punishment in a few questions.

1. *Who shall inflict punishment?* Generally speaking *the father*. The mother also may give the little tots a slap now and then — but never on the ears never on the head! In certain cases where mothers are especially fitted by strength and character to do so, they may apply the rod or stick to the older children, more especially if the father neglects his duty in this regard. As a general rule, the mother is not more fit to administer a beating than girls are to throw stones. The father is the bearer of authority. His strength and earnestness should supply what the mother lacks on account of her natural infirmity and tenderness. For this reason Sacred Scripture, speaking of the punishment of children, always mentions the father. Wherefore, mothers become guilty of sin when they hide or excuse before the father who is seldom at home, the faults of children which deserve punishment. Still more guilty of sin do those fathers become, who concern themselves either not at all or but very little about the punishment of the children. Fatigue from labor and business, or being prevented on account of having to attend so and

so many societies and meetings cannot be validly pleaded by them as excuse. The chief concern, honor and fortune in all their fullness for a father are his children. If his ambition is, to be to them only a breadwinner, he will have no idea of the dignity with which God has clothed him and of the grave responsibility which rests on his shoulders. His special duty is to aid the mother by dealing out a reasonable punishment to the children, to uphold authority, to train children to obedience. In most cases the fathers are to blame if their children when grown up, are saucy and disobedient. The universal cry which one hears nowadays, viz., that "there are no obedient children anymore," can and must be set off with another complaint, namely, "there are no more fathers who train their children from an early age to habits of obedience by administering a reasonable punishment." There are many men who are married, but among these there are altogether too few genuine Christian fathers. With most men one must already be satisfied, if, by labor and sobriety, they seek to promote the material welfare of their children. But God is not satisfied with this much only; for it amounts to scarcely one tenth of their paternal duties, among which the punishment of children at the hands of the father, stands out preëminently.

2. *What shall parents punish?* The answer is simple: that which really deserves a punishment, that is to say, whatever punishable actions proceed from a free act of the will, after the little ones have attained a sufficient knowledge of good and evil. When there is question of mere exterior naughti-

ness, it may be advisable at first to impart some advice, also a rebuke, accompanied with a threat of punishment in case of thoughtless repetition; but do not inflict any punishment yet. This shall be administered only when real faults are committed that deserve punishment, by way of a slight penance and atonement for transgressions, and in order to prevent a relapse. Such faults are above all, *cursing, lying, pilfering and stealing, stubbornness and self-will.*

St. Louis of France had the tongue of those among his subjects, who were found guilty of cursing, pierced with a red-hot iron. If he reigned here .... he would not find enough hands to carry out his punishment, and countless children of eight or ten years of age, not to mention those that are grown up, should have to run around with a pierced tongue. To such an extent has hell opened itself that its evil spirits seem to lord it over the greater part of mankind through legions of blaspheming devils! But this is terrible! Vulgar abuse of the most Sacred Name is death to every sentiment of veneration for God and all religion. He that only takes the name of God in vain, *shall not be unpunished* (Deutoronomy 5, 11). Is it, therefore, not a sacred obligation of parents to preserve their children from the chastisement of God, by training them with the aid of effective punishment to help rid themselves of every kind of cursing?

Not unfrequently one hears good parents who are most discreet as to their speech in the family circle, complain that their little ones learn from other children, whilst at play on the street or in

neighboring houses, most shocking profanity and other expressions that are still worse, and then repeat and continue them at home. In a case like this what is to be done? Efficient means to counteract it are, a short admonition, a smarting punishment applied with a switch to the back or to the hands, and, finally, vigilance joined to a strict command forbidding all intercourse and play with strange children in the future.

*Every species of lying comes from the devil, the father of lies.* Its evil influence on the character of the child is incalculable. A youngster with a hundred naughty faults, but who is frank and upright, is brought up a hundred times easier than a seemingly well-behaved child which is addicted to lying. Therefore, parents must begin early to punish every and even the slightest falsehood, until the spirit of lying has been radically expelled.

"*He that lies, steals*" says a proverb. Little filchings, pilfering or embezzling a few pennies, are far more dangerous than many parents are aware of. The complaint is quite general that there is such a great lack of honesty among adult folks. And how could it be otherwise? What did these grown up folks do when they were children? They began with petty embezzling and ended with great stealings. It is to be hoped, O parents, that you surely do not desire to educate your children to become thieves and cheats. Well then, do not fail to pass severe judgment on the petty thieves at home; for, in all cases, they are a great disgrace to the family.

Punishment above all is necessary in order to

break *stubbornness*. Satan lied to Eve saying: *You shall be as Gods*, independent, your own masters. Ever since he makes the same suggestion from within and without to every child of Adam, even to the little screamer on his mother's arm. No descendant of Adam is naturally willing to subject himself and others to the will of another and to obey him, but rather to be free and independent. But this cannot be. Man is a creature of God. Now to be a creature is equal to being a servant, a servant of God and of all those whom this invisible Supreme Being has clothed as His visible representatives with His authority, both for the welfare of the individual as well as of the whole human family. It follows then that every human creature and, still more, every Christian, because of the God-Man who by his obedience redeemed mankind, which fell through disobedience, is brought face to face during his whole life with the undeniable duty of obedience towards God and His representatives. This obedience is the proper yoke under which he has to bow his self-will, that is to say, his own individual self. When will he bear this patiently? When the resisting self-will, the "stiff-neck," as the Holy Spirit calls it, shall have been bowed under the yoke from tender infancy; when you, parents, are not satisfied merely with admonishing your children to be obedient and with showing them the way by a good example by your own obedience towards God and His representatives, especially His Church, but when you give to this admonition and this example that emphasis which is necessary, by being inflexible and inexora-

ble, and by punishing every manifestation, every movement of self-will, of obstinacy and, indeed, not merely now and then, but continually throughout all childhood. By so doing and only in this way can you bring up obedient and, therefore, also good children, even in a land and at a time where your children imbibe, as it were, from all sides the spirit of independence and rebellion against every authority, — provided, of course, that you implore the blessing and grace of God by constant prayer.

One often hears from the mouth of parents the complaint: "Nowadays there are no obedient children anymore." Almost in every case the priest might retort by complaining: There are few parents nowadays who know how to break the stubbornness and self-will of their children by a wise discipline from an early period and to bow them under the yoke of obedience. At all times and in all places the words of the Holy Ghost are true: "A horse not broken becometh stubborn and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him, and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow . . . . Give him not liberty in his youth. Bow down his neck while he is young and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not" (Ecclus. 30, 8–12).

3. *Why and for what purpose shall you inflict punishment?* In order that the children may do a little penance for the faults which they committed, and that their weak, inconstant will may be strengthened against a relapse into the same fault

by a salutary fear of punishment. Such a pure intention is absolutely required to secure a good effect after having inflicted punishment; children also easily see into this good intention, and the result which is so important, is that they sincerely love instead of disliking their parents who administer the correction. Thus the very punishments themselves pave a sure way to the heart of the child. It is a matter of general experience that parents, who from weakness or a false affection for their children, do not punish them when they deserve a whipping, are not only not loved by these, but actually despised, yea even cursed and execrated in their very graves. On the other hand, parents who with loving earnestness help their children by means of consistent chastisement to rid themselves of their moral failings, may hope to receive one day love and gratitude from their offspring. More than once did I hear Catholic men and women say: "I am thankful to my parents of sainted memory for every stroke I received of them!"

But, as has already been said, here it is necessary that every burst of sudden passion and anger be suppressed while inflicting the chastisement. Nothing is more harmful, than when children notice that the father punishes only when he comes home half-drunk, or after he lost while gambling, or when he had no success at work or in his business; or that the mother uses the whip, only or at least mostly, when gossips told her how this or that one spoke disrespectfully of her, or when the neighbor's chickens scratched her garden. Here

then the poor children must feel her anger, and the infliction of punishment on them becomes as it were a safety valve through which the steam of bad humor escapes, lest the fuming chest explode like a boiler. Children seeing this usually whisper to one another: "Father and mother are again in a bad mood to-day! Duck your head, take to your heels until the clouds have passed over and the storm has blown over. After that they will again let us do as we please." — Therefore, parents, reflect on the motive you have when you punish. The intention you have can make of the punishment either a dangerous poison or an effectual remedy.

4. *How shall you punish?* Or, what manner of punishment shall you choose?—In the first place, the punishment must *be proportionate to the fault.* It must be lighter for lesser transgressions, heavier for more grievous ones, especially if these are relapses and, consequently, indicate a greater weakness and inconstancy. A thoughtful physician, when called to cure slight spells of fever, applies light remedies in smaller doses; while, on the other hand, he will seek to break a dangerous sickness with stronger remedies. Besides, the effect of this procedure is that the sense of justice may not be violated and the heart of the child who received punishment, may be preserved from giving way to a feeling of bitterness.

Furthermore, the punishment must be *adapted* to the *disposition of the child* and the *peculiarity of the fault* which is to be combated. It is by no means necessary to employ always stick or rod.

From hardened boys who, as the saying goes, have a thick hide, the strokes glance off, as a stream of water does from a rock without penetrating it, more especially when the feeble hand of a mother dispenses them. Perhaps before their very eyes, or surely behind their back, the unruly boy will laugh at them and behave with still greater impertinence. Nay, if larger and more grown up children should be subjected to a flogging, parents run the risk, where there is a lack of filial piety, and alas, this is but too frequently the case, of meeting with obstinate resistance, which sometimes does not even recoil from an actual assault on father and mother themselves. Wherefore, sheer human prudence already requires that you choose also other means of correction. For instance, do you wish to rid the child of filching eatables, etc., and committing petty thefts? At the appointed time give it the *necessary* food, but withhold its favorite dish as also all sweetmeats, saying at the same time: Of such and such a dish you shall get nothing to-day in punishment of your having taken things on the sly. Is the child quarrelsome while at play with its brothers and sisters, inclined to insist unduly on being right, send it for a time into a room and lock it up after you have assigned to the disorderly youngster some specified work which must be finished before you again allow it to rejoin the other children. When it is at play on the street or in the yard and if it should not come into the house after being repeatedly called, take it with a firm grasp into the room and send it immediately to bed

without giving it anything to eat. If you caught it in a lie, inflict a moderate punishment on it for the nonce; but then compel it for a time to hold its tongue, by remarking quietly and dryly whenever it makes any assertion: Him that once has told a lie, people will not trust forsooth, even if afterwards he should try to tell the plain and simple truth. You once told me a lie. Before I again believe what you say, I must first ascertain by long experience that you have thoroughly sworn off all lying. If the tall girl, the grown up son should have merited punishment for their impudent stubbornness, for strolling about at nighttime, going to amusements and keeping company without your knowledge and against your will: you cannot perhaps lash them any more, but you can withhold from them their spending money, you can and should deny them to go out or visit or enjoy some amusement, and, indeed, with such an earnestness that you will say: Either you must obey now and stay at home, or you shall have no home anymore! — Whilst deliberating in this manner, for which you must also implore by zealous prayer enlightenment from above, choose the punishment. Above all you must dispense punishment *without partiality.* Woe to the family, if father or mother or both, and mostly on account of exterior insignificant excellencies or defects consider and treat one child as a pet, the other as a mean drudge; or if, as in case of a second marriage, the stepchildren are always shoved aside in order to show favor to one's own offspring! All the children are spoiled in this case; the petted

ones and those that are punished unjustly, as well as the others, because they are, as it were, compelled to despise the parents on account of their lack of equal affection and sense of justice for all. Parents who are partial do not look upon their children as images of God, but as an agreeable or displeasing plaything. This plaything, however, in their hands becomes a rod with which they chastise themselves.

5. The last question: "*When shall you punish?*" I will answer in two words. In the first place, begin to correct immediately when the first fault is committed, let us say, commencing with the completion of the first year of the little one's life. A single bitter drop, if then administered, is more effectual than a whole barrel of absinth or wormwood later on. Most of the lamentations and tears of parents on account of vicious grown up children, find their explanation in the neglect of timely punishment.

In the second place, punish as *soon as possible* after you have made the threat, provided that you have overcome every movement of spiteful anger and have quieted down. Otherwise the effect will be weakened and, alas, almost always the following word is verified in regard to the proposed punishment of children: Put off is declared off!

Cling, then, Christian parents, to the counsels which have been given you in a spirit of love for yourselves and your children. Pray to God that He may always show you what is right in regard to the punishment of your children and that He may bless your efforts and make them fruitful. And

you, O children, accept your punishment willingly. Remember that it is but a mark of love on the part of your parents when they punish you for your faults, and that they are bound by a sacred duty to educate you in the discipline of the Lord. Only by fulfilling this duty can they save their own soul, and only in this manner can and will they make you happy in time and eternity. Amen.

## 28. On the Duty of setting a Good Example.

In omnibus praebe teipsum exemplum bonorum operum.
Titus 2, 27.

"In all things show thyself an example of good works."

Thus far we have considered the first three obligations of Christian education. Parents must point out to their children the way that leads to heaven and set them as it were, on this path. This is done by a pious religious education on the part of parents and especially of mothers, and with the aid and assistance which the Church and her schools give to parents according to the commission and the right conferred upon her by Jesus Christ, who will one day judge fathers and mothers. By *constant watchfulness* they must keep temptations away by which Satan, in concert with the world and wicked passions, seeks to lure children from the straight path that leads towards heaven, on to the crooked by-way of sin. — Besides, a *reasonable punishment* must urge children forward on the steep path to heaven when they begin to lag behind or even grow refractory. These three obligations are capped and brought to a point by a fourth one by which we mean *good example* which is to draw the

children onward and lead them upward at the hand of their parents. This fourth obligation embraces a twofold duty:

1. Parents must keep away from their children bad example from without and endeavor to surround them with a good influence; and
2. they must themselves in their whole life be to them a good example.

1. This first duty we have already discussed when treating of the obligation of watchfulness. I only mention it once more for this reason, in order to meet the frequent complaint which parents make to excuse themselves, saying: "Up to the twelfth, fourteenth year my children led a good Christian life. But after that they were spoiled by bad companions." I have no desire to state that parents are to blame in every instance as the cause of this change for the worse. Circumstances, indeed, may be such as to tear parents and children so far apart, that the former will lose all efficient influence on the life and character of the latter. But this certainly is not always the case, notably not where children still remain for years under the eyes of parents. Should these even then stray into byways, those words of the Divine Saviour find a proper application: *Whilst you were asleep, Satan sowed cockle into the hearts of your children.* Or, did you not allow your children to take part without bound or measure in amusements which brought them in contact with companions of questionable, dangerous character? Did you keep your eyes open on their so-called company? Here especially the proverb may be appropriately quoted: "*With-*

*stand the beginnings.*" With a little seriousness and determination on your part you can quickly put an end to a love affair, which is just being formed, perhaps at too early an age, or with a heretic or a fallen away Catholic. But if this thing, which young folks in their ignorance call love, has once inflamed their hearts, then usually you come too late with your weeping, lamenting and uttering abusive language. You are like people who would extinguish a burning house with a cup full of water.

Wherefore, keep away from your children the evil examples of dangerous companionship. Surround and protect them as much as possible with good, trustworthy friends. By the bye, this is one of the chief aims of *Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin* for young men and young ladies. In such pious associations precisely, young people should find fellow members, friends, with whom they can associate without exposing themselves to the danger of a bad example, but rather where they find an opportunity of coming under the influence of good companionship. Incalculable, invaluable has been the amount of good wrought in this regard by Sodalities of the Blessed Virgin Mary throughout the Catholic church for more than three centuries. Wherever these societies exist, parents can do nothing better than to work hand in hand with the priest, so that their children will join them; in this manner they shall ward off evil from their offspring, and surround them with the wholesome influence of good example.—But enough of this duty which comes rather under the head of watchfulness.

It is 2. much more important that parents themselves should always set their children a good example, never a bad one. *The necessity* for so doing is derived from the *instinct or impulse of imitation* which the Creator has implanted into the heart of all mankind. This impulse not unfrequently is the basis for the education of man. Everywhere, at home, in school, in the workshops, in the studio one hears the remark made: "I will show you how, and then you do as I have done." Hence, the well-known adage: "Words may move, but example draws." This is true in small affairs as well as in great, in good as well as in evil ones. The instinct of imitation, therefore, is derived from the Creator. Now when the Creator entered among mankind as the *Redeemer*, he took this instinct into His service. Jesus could have paid the ransom and given satisfaction in one moment. But His redeemed brethren were also to lead a new life of virtue and sanctity by way of preparation for heaven, which had been re-opened. This new life he places before us, not merely by commandment and counsel, in doctrine and exhortation, but also in His personal life here upon earth which lasted thirty-three years. For this reason precisely He wished to live through the various stages of human life, to be able to call to all: "*I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done.*"

The power inherent to a living example, which, as it were, compels others to emulate it, increases when *vested with authority and inspired by love.* A proverb says: *The king's example forms the fashion of the world.* And, in truth, the evil examples

which from the courts of princes and kings and the palaces of the great and wealthy had passed into the world, exerted, if we are to believe the combined testimony of history and experience, an almost irresistible influence on the masses of the people. And if during the fifth century after Christ, the imperial mansion in Constantinople was styled *rather a cloister that a palace*, this transformation was effected by the example of sanctity set by the Empress Pulcheria. — Now as regards *love*, apart from authority, everyday life demonstrates by a thousand and one little as well as great, evil as well as good instances, that it presupposes, as an ancient orator asserts, "*equality, similarity of character and outward manners, or that it effects all this with the aid of imitation and transformation.*" Moreover, infinite love rendered the Son of God like unto us, making Him our brother, so that as God-Man, He might draw us towards Himself with *the cords of Adam, with the bonds of love* (Osee, 11, 4).

Now by applying the above to parents, it will immediately be clear in general that their example exerts the greatest influence on children. They are the most exalted personages in the eyes of their little ones, still higher than kings and emperors. Here we have the superiority of God resplendent in His immediate representatives! In keeping with this preeminence God has instilled a feeling of deep reverence into the heart of children. And this reverence is such, that they do not, as the saying goes of the great ones of the world, *die with awe* of their parents; no — it is thoroughly imbued with affection. A whole heaven of love is revealed in

the words — "father," "mother," "child." No other love is as tender and intimate, as strong and lasting, as that of parents and children. For this reason no other love possesses such a power to change or to transform the manner of one's life as the affection of children for their parents, whom they love and, at the same time, revere. As a rule, children bear in their body, especially in the face, the features of their parents. Such is the result of formative nature under the direction of the hand of God. Also a likeness of good or evil propensities and dispositions of the soul is transmitted from parents to children, like an heirloom, so to speak, in the family. In truth one can often assert: This or that child possesses the meekness or irritability of temper, the industry or sloth, the openness or deceit, the obedience or obstinacy of its father or mother, or of both. The aforementioned disposition, however, are, perhaps, still wanting in development; this eventually is effected by the living example of parents, which is impressed on the whole being of the child as if it were soft wax. Every day with its constantly repeated example makes this impression deeper, more solid and almost indelible; and very soon the children are just like their parents, either good or bad, pure or impure, pious or impious, Christian or heathen-like. The good which the child perceives in the conduct of its parents, draws it mildly, yet powerfully, towards the side of virtue. What is bad, does not appear to its eyes as evil, simply because it sees its parents perform it. It considers itself entitled, nay even bound to do the same. In short,

the influence of parental example on children is quite of a decisive nature. Whom, then, in the first place does the injunction concern, "Let your light shine?" You, O parents. Whom above all does the serious threat strike: "*He that shall scandalize one of these little ones . . . it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea?*" Those parents who give their own children a bad example. All this becomes still more evident, when we reflect, that the first three duties of parents, namely, religious instruction, watchfulness, punishment, can have a decided effect only if they are seconded by the good example of father and mother; and, that all three are rendered fruitless and useless by their bad example. Or, of what use is *Christian instruction* at home, in church, in school; of what avail are even all exterior exercises of domestic piety without a good example, or, rather, when they are confronted with a bad example on the part of parents? — A mother told her nine-year-old daughter one Sunday morning: "Hurry, so that you may come in time for Mass." "Mother," replied the child, "you go seldom and father does not go at all. Now I, too, want to stop at home and play."

Not seldom the priest must admonish children whose parents do not lead a good life, just as the Divine Saviour spoke to the Jews, who had the bad example of their teachers, the Scribes and Pharisees, before their eyes. "*All things whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do; but according to their works do ye not: for they* SAY, *and* DO *not.*" (Matth. 23, 3).

In most cases, however, the priest realizes that such an admonition will profit but little. The example of parents draws mightier than their words, their teaching and exhortation. This the heathens already acknowledged as an undeniable truth. One of their fables tells us, that the mother of a crab family who herself always swam backwards, constantly admonished her young invariably to swim forwards. The young answered pertly and boldly: "Mother, first show us how by your own example." It avails very little or nothing to say to the child: "Do what we, your parents, command you." They must be able to say: "Do what you see us *do*;" — otherwise they are guilty of a species of hypocrisy which children will not be slow to detect. Of Jesus Christ, the best of educators, it is expressly mentioned: "*He began to do and to teach.*" For thirty years before He began to preach, He had practiced what He proposed to preach. And during the last three years He did not command nor counsel anything, but He performed it Himself in the highest degree of perfection. His example, much more than His doctrine, is the school of Christians, the school of saints. Thus, too, the example of parents is the real school and the most effective instruction for children.

And as to watchfulness! Essentially it consists precisely in this that parents seek to keep aloof from their offspring the infectious influence of bad example. Hence would it not be ridiculous, if parents wished to preserve their children from such infection as might befall them outdoors, without the house, whilst they themselves, by their

own example, should hold their children embraced, as it were, in the same peril of having them infected in their own home? Is cholera within the dwelling-room not more dangerous than without the house? When a member of the family is afflicted with some infectious disease, physicians order their bed-clothes, linen, drinking and eating utensils to be kept separate, or even, for greater security's sake, to be burned and destroyed. Would it not then also be better, if parents who bear about and in themselves the pestilence of a bad example, were separated from their children and the children from them? Would it not be better, if God were to let the parents die, in order to put an end to their evil influence on the children, or, if He were to remove the children by a premature death from certain destruction at the hands of the parents? We short-sighted human beings verily do not know, how often the all-wise, all-bountiful, but also just and avenging God decrees or at least permits cases of death in the family, precisely from such a motive. This much is certain: The good example of parents must form, as it were, the bulwark, behind which to hide themselves and their children, in order to hold at bay with vigilant eye the evil examples from without.

Finally, the *punishment* of children receives its necessary strengthening only by the good example of parents, whilst a bad example renders it all but ineffectual, and, indeed, converts it, for the most part, into poison. Or, can parents punish in children what they themselves do before the eyes of the little ones? Can the children not say in all

truth; Why, I only do what you do? Therefore, if you would punish me, punish yourself first! Should you fail to do so, you are unjust and utterly deficient in love towards me, and I cannot respect or love you any longer! —

One day a girl of ten years of age was caught telling a lie by her mother, who punished her most severely. She accepted the punishment most willingly and conceived a firm resolve never again to tell a lie after the mother had imparted to her a very serious admonition and a long instruction on the hatefulness and peril of liars. Immediately thereafter the girl heard how this same mother told something first to the maid-servant and then to the father which she distinctly knew was a coarse lie. What was the consequence? Later on having become a literary lady and authoress, the girl wrote thus of herself: From the day that I received a punishment for something I found my mother herself guilty of immediately thereafter, I had lost all respect for her. All her subsequent admonitions were useless, and the punishments she inflicted imbittered me. Fortunately, I was soon thereafter separated from mother and placed in a good religious institution. It was only there that I came to a right understanding of my sore plight and began to combat and discard the faults of my youth.

Thus you see, even the punishment of children when unaccompanied by a good example, is not only ineffectual and powerless, but positively mischievous.

Therefore Christian parents, beware of every evil example in presence of your children. You

are obliged to do so by the love you owe to the Heavenly Father, to Jesus Christ, to yourselves, to your children. Evil, that is to say, the inclination to evil transgression, is already contained like an ominous spark of original sin in the heart of children. Should your bad example at close range begin to exert an influence on them, it will be like tinder which will soon cause the spark to flare up into a lurid flame. Or consider it under another aspect: Your bad examples are like so many poisonous seed kernels, or slips, that you implant into the heart of the children, which is so susceptible of sin. How then can you be surprised if in a short time the weeds of sin shoot up higher than your and your children's head? "What you sow you shall reap" — may be applied with much more truth to your example than to your words. On the contrary, see to it that you can with full justice repeat to your children what the Apostle, St. Paul said to the Christians at Corinth, after he had preached to them: "I beseech you, be ye followers of me as I also am of Christ" (1. Cor. 4, 16).

Wherefore, draw your children with a sacred, wellnigh irresistible power forward on the way to heaven. Thus shall you journey with them hand in hand upward to the house of your Heavenly Father. And long yet after your eyes shall have been closed in death and your bones crumbled to dust, your children will recount to themselves and their little ones: "Oh, we were blessed with good parents,—parents who always led us forward with the shining light of their good example! Let us not cause them, who now look lovingly down upon

us from heaven, any disgrace but honor! Let us lead a life such as they have taught us by their word and example. Indissoluble union with them in the bliss of heaven, in our Heavenly Father's home, shall be our reward." Amen.

## 29. On the good Example which Parents are to give their Children as regards the Fulfilment of the First Three Commandments.

In omnibus praebe teipsum exemplum bonorum operum.
Tit. 2, 7.

"In all things show thyself an example of good works."

The most necessary and effectual means to draw children onward on the path to heaven, is the good example of parents. Religious instruction at home, in school, in church, careful surveillance, earnest reproof and punishment, derive strength and success only from a good example. Should this be wanting or, what is worse, a bad example take its place, for instance scandal on the part of parents, then all other means will prove unavailing; the entire education will be a failure. Hence the words, "In all things show thyself an example of good works" which St. Paul addressed to his pupil Titus whom he had appointed and consecrated bishop of a congregation, may also be applied to parents and, even more so, particularly to them, because their example to children is immediate and lasts longer than that of any bishop in regard to the flock under his care. St. Paul says, "In all things." Accordingly, we might go through all the ten com-

mandments, since they are fundamentally nothing else than the way which God laid out to heaven, supplying it with as many sign posts as it were, as there are precepts in the Decalogue, thus marking exactly that way by which the good example of parents must draw children onward. But to examine all the points singly, would probably make us branch out too far. Let us then consider, for the time being, some of the principal points of the first three commandments, in which parents must be a shining light of good example to their offspring.

1. *The first Commandment* comprises the important duties of religion and piety, which constitute that golden chain uniting us to God, and earth to heaven. *Faith, hope and charity,* those divine virtues which unite us directly with God, have been implanted into our heart by holy baptism; beginning with the use of reason, however, they must grow strong, by being practiced, and thus extend their influence on our religious-moral life. Acts of the three theological virtues ought to be made every day and form a regular part of our common family prayers. This can best be done, if father, mother or one of the grown up school children lead in praying them aloud. *The usual prayers mornings and evenings,* before and after meals, are the natural expression of interior piety, and, at the same time, the necessary means by which it is kept alive. *Tender devotion and love to Jesus, the Redeemer, and to Mary, the Heavenly Mother,* above all must thoroughly warm up and vivify the delicate hearts of children, if they are not to grow numb and die

in the icy, cold atmosphere of the world. Again and again have I shown you the necessity of this piety, of this "family" piety I should say. Does it not follow directly from this, that parents are bound to give a *good example* in all their actions? Do you think it enough to simply call to the children, "Pray, you must and shall pray" — while they notice that you, O parents, never say any prayers yourselves and never pray with them? Can you excuse yourselves saying: "I as father, I the mother, have no time to pray on account of too much work; moreover, I am not disposed to do so, — am too tired and sleepy, but, nevertheless, I always tell my children to pray?"

Be not blind! Do not deceive yourselves! Only pious parents, such as pray themselves, shall have children who are devoted to prayer. A father, a mother that prays encircled by the little ones who eventually, as a matter of course, become prayerful children, presents a sight which is a source of delight in the eyes of heaven and earth. Such is the truly Christian family which is but a beautiful reproduction of the Holy Family of Nazareth; such the soil rendered fruitful by the heavenly dew and light and warmth in which truly pious children grow up, who, because of their piety, are preserved from being paralyzed by the icy spirit of the world.

As I once already had occasion to remark, long and tedious prayers are ill applied in the case of the little ones, who may even in their hearts conceive for them an aversion and disgust. Let prayer be short and sweet, and recited with that recollection and reverence which are required to elevate

the mind to God; this is the best method. It is, however, also necessary and can be attained in every family where father and mother, but especially the mother, have a genuine, heart-felt piety. But if they are deficient in piety, if father or mother cannot even lay claim to being a Catholic, or if the father is a numskull who finds it ridiculous to pray; if the mother is a woman of the world whose heart was early scorched and seared with mundane gratification and vanity, — it is utterly impossible for parents of this description to bring up children with the example of *such* piety! Moreover, it must be said that in this regard it would have been a hundred, yes, a thousand times better for such parents if they never had become father and mother. For the children of ungodly parents almost through necessity become ungodly themselves, and as *godliness is profitable to all things*, so ungodliness is, to say the least, the beginning of moral-religious ruin.

At the occasion of the Catholic Reunion at Aix-la-Chapelle on the 11th day of Sept., 1879, Windhorst, of sainted memory, gave expression to the following sentiment: If the woman who is called by God to be the guardian of piety, fulfils this duty within the family before the eyes of her husband and children in a worthy manner, she serves to spread a blessing, greater than which cannot be imagined. Then he adds: If women and young ladies desire to have their picture taken, I know of no better position than to photograph mothers in the act of hearing the catechism of their little ones, and maidens, whilst holding a rosary devoutly in their hand.

O ye young men and young ladies, you who deem yourselves to be called by God to the holy state of matrimony, nurture the germs of devotion and piety in your heart! Such is the best and the most bountiful endowment in preparation for your marriage. Fathers and mothers, especially you mothers, you who are nearest to the heart of children, do be godly yourselves in word and example; then you shall succeed in bestowing on their hearts an endowment which will shed light and strength and warmth upon the path of their life.

2. Concerning the most important point of the second commandment, I have already spoken to you when discussing the duty of punishing children. As soon as you notice that these have learnt from other children and grown up folks to curse and swear, or, also, to use vulgar, nasty, opprobrious language and expressions, you must check them by inflicting an immediate and severe punishment, *lest they contract a bad habit of profanity.* But how can you punish them if children hear and learn all this from parents themselves? And such alas, is but too often the case!

Many children, and they are really to be pitied, learn from father and mother not the sign of the Cross, nor the Our Father, the Hail Mary, not short ejaculatory little prayers to Jesus, Mary, to the Guardian Angel, but, on the contrary, the most abominable curses and words of reproach, and the most horrible execrations "to the devil and into hell." There are families where the children in this regard are better than the parents. At school and in church children learn how abominable and

sinful it is to curse and swear. Their conscience, as yet delicate, is horrified when they hear father and mother at home do what they recognize to be an abominable sin. Good and pious children will then pray so that God in His mercy may not punish, but rather convert their parents. Indeed, I have even known children who had the Christian courage, to request their parents modestly, though none the less impressively, not to curse and swear anymore. Once upon a time a certain son contrived in an amusing manner to rid his mother, who was a widow, of the habit of cursing and uttering insulting words. Amongst other hateful expressions of opprobrious and profane language the mother was in the habit, when an excessive burst of ill will seized her, to call her son "a dog." It so happened in the city where they lived, that the time of reporting dogs for the tax list came round. Secretly the son repaired to the office and reported that his mother kept a dog at home. Shortly thereafter an officer arrived with a bill for the collection of dog tax. The mother threw her hands above her head in surprise and assured him, she had no dog. "But you have, mother," said the son as he stepped out before her, "you always call me a dog." The mother paid the dog tax, but never again uttered such hateful, profane and disgraceful language thereafter.

Bear this in mind — The parental abode where father and mother are addicted to cursing and swearing, is a real ante-room of hell, which, it is but too likely, will later be followed by hell properly so called, where parents and children to-

gether with all the devils shall curse and execrate one another throughout eternity. O parents! do not look upon this as though it were a trifling matter! Overcome your impatience and anger so that you may not be carried away by them to curse and swear or to utter shameful language and imprecations. Do this *for your own sake;* for, just to intimate it briefly, how can you expect that the children will respect you, if daily they hear such vulgar words from your lips? How can you expect that the blessing of heaven will descend upon your household, if you invoke upon it the malediction and vengeance of God day after day, hour after hour?

Moreover, avoid all manner of profaneness also *for the sake of the little ones.* Only if the sacred Name of God is kept holy by yourselves can the reverence for God Himself and all that is sacred and divine be preserved in the soul of your children.

3. As regards the third commandment, I can safely assert, that the temporal and eternal weal or woe of parents, as well as of their little ones, nay, of the entire family, depends on the good or evil example of father and mother in the matter of a full sanctification of the Sunday. If the Lord's Day be thoroughly kept holy by the parents and, owing to the influence of their example, also by the children, the most bountiful blessing of heaven will be bestowed on the six week days, both for body and soul, time and eternity. But if it be desecrated by grievous *sins of omission*, followed as a rule by mortal sins of commission; if it be perverted into

a veritable devil's day, then what can you expect of the six week days that follow?

As to *abstaining from servile work*, I shall not say a word. The greater the conscientiousness of parents by which they see to it that all necessary domestic and culinary work which can be done on Saturday, be actually performed on Saturdays, so that Sunday can be observed as a real day of rest,—the more readily, profoundly and permanently shall a holy awe and reverence for the Day of the Lord be impressed on the heart of their children.—As *to hearing Mass*, I shall also add but a word. The third commandment of God, which is explained and defined more fully by the second commandment of the Church *obliges all Christians who have attained the use of reason, and that under the pain of mortal sin, to attend Mass in its entirety and completeness with becoming devotion on all Sundays and Holy Days of obligation.* Now, if we consider here the influence of parental example, it must be clear: If children see that father and mother do not permit themselves to be kept from Mass on Sundays by anything, except a real, not merely fancied or pretended moral impossibility, they will hardly ever be tempted, or even seduced, to miss it. But, if they should see and hear how father and mother say: I don't feel quite well; maybe it will rain and then I might take a cold; I expect company,—have to attend to this or that at home; I must go to this or that place to visit an acquaintance or relative whom I have not seen for a long time; or, I must see about a business affair with him; but you children will have to go to Mass —: in such a case,

alas, the Evil Spirit but too soon and only too effectually shall whisper to these children, father and mother could easily go to church and yet they do not go, why should we go?

Some time ago a missionary told me the following story. A Catholic mother at seven o'clock of a Sunday morning went to awaken her eight-year old son admonishing him that it was high time to get up, otherwise he would not be able to get to Mass anymore. The boy was still sleepy and begged his mother: "Let me sleep yet; father is still asleep too." The husband, who was a Protestant, heard this in an adjoining room. Immediately he jumped up out of bed, drove the boy from his couch and said to him: "Now hurry! It will not be long anymore and I shall go with you to Mass." On the same day he went to a certain priest who was a religious, and said to him: "Your reverence I must and am also willing to return to the Catholic church, because I see that my example is necessary in order to keep my children to a fulfilment of their duties."

Yes, indeed, the example of parents is necessary for a regular attendance at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The priest finds this out every Monday and Tuesday when he inquires in the school room as to who neglected Mass on the previous Sunday. Excepting cases of sickness, the boys and girls that usually absent themselves therefrom, are as a rule, the offspring of parents who either do not attend Mass themselves at all, or, at least, not regularly. The very same condition obtains in reference to the children that are grown up, I mean

young ladies, and especially young men. Let me mention one instance; the evil custom often prevails in city and country that the young men and even the misses, although in a lesser number, but still too numerous, remain lagging behind near the door of the church. When the weather is favorable, therefore during the entire summer, they even lounge around the entrance on the outside. There one can see them stand in groups with their hat perched on their head, cigar in mouth, turning their back towards the church, laughing and talking. After having grown tired of standing, they sneak like thieves around the corner and then lie to their parents at dinner as though they had heard Mass. And such young men constitute the future of a Catholic congregation! I ask, did not every one of them miss Mass, therefore, commit a mortal sin, and, besides, add to this first yet a second deadly transgression that consisted in a grave public scandal and, perhaps, in seducing also other comrades to sin? How will they spend Sunday afternoon and the entire week? And what will become of them in the near future? They are simply so many recruits for the great army of fallen away Catholics! But how did it come that these young lads, in rare cases also lasses, fall so deep during the first, second, third and fourth year after their first Holy Communion? Evil companions seduced them. But those who seduced them are also the sons of parents that belong to the congregation. And, if not, how does it come that they permit themselves to be led astray so easily? Because their father or mother gave them the example of missing Mass.

The apple is never found to fall far from its parent branch.

I ought to add yet a word *about coming too late* or *leaving too soon* during the Mass on Sundays, a habit, which in some localities gets to be a source of real scandal and a public disturbance. If one is acquainted with the members of a congregation somewhat closer, it will soon be found, that also in this regard the truth of the saying is verified, You need not be told, the young act just as the old. Who are those children, little or big, that almost always come late to Mass on Sundays? They are the children of those parents who have adopted the evil habit of getting themselves ready to go to church only after the last bell has been rung. This habit of negligence in parents is continued by their children. If parents imagine that they are still early enough when they come at the Gospel, their children will not scruple to put in an appearance during, or, even after the Offertory. And at the end of Mass, after the priest has scarcely taken the Sacred Blood, quite a few seem to be afraid that the church roof will fall down; for this reason they rush out in crowds. Of course, they do not stand in need of the priest's blessing at the end of Mass. Neither do they care about the three Hail Marys and the Salve Regina, which the representative of Christ has prescribed to be recited for the needs of the Church; nor do they mind the Angel of the Lord at the end of High Mass.

Look at those singular Catholics that act in such wise. In most cases you can trace their abominable and highly scandalous habit to the bad example of their parents.

Let us conclude for to-day. The first three commandments comprise all the duties we have towards God, the Divine Being, the Lord's Name and the Lord's Day. The substance of religion consists in the fulfilment of these duties. Unless you fulfil them, you have no religion, nor are you Christians, nor children of the Heavenly Father, nor a godly family on earth, but despicable worms of clay who themselves turned away from heaven, in order to creep meanly about in the dust and dirt of this world and, finally, to perish.

O Christian parents! Bring up your little ones to be children of God, and your family to be a true godly family. Do this by being to them a shining example in the exercise of our holy religion, which, like a golden chain, shall draw you and your children onward and upward to the Father who is in Heaven. Amen.

## 30. On the Good Example which Parents are to set their Children as regards Attendance at Divine Service on Sundays and Hearing the Word of God.

In omnibus praebe te exemplum bonorum operum. Tit. 2, 7.

"In all things show thyself an example of good works."

The saying, that "children will be what their parents are," shows us the great importance, nay, the absolute necessity of a good example on the part of parents. This rests on the instinct of imitation which the Creator has implanted in the heart of children. It is a call from without which finds an echo within, a power by which children permit themselves to be drawn forward readily and willingly (I speak to Christian parents and children) on the way to heaven, which God Himself has marked out to us in the Ten Commandments as by so many sign-posts and mile-stones. In our last sermon we have considered the influence of parental example in reference to the first three commandments.

As regards the *sanctification of Sunday by a devout hearing of a whole Mass*, I desire to add yet a word or two. Christian parents, be firmly convinced, that with this sanctification, the temporal

blessing, yea the entire religion of your family, of your children, will either stand or fall. There are many examples and facts which go to prove and corroborate this assertion. In a certain parish of Westphalia there lived a very large, well-to-do farmer's family, at a distance of about a twenty minutes' walk from church. Excepting the smallest children and, of course, cases of sickness, all its members heard Mass on Sundays regularly, attending Early and High Masses alternately. But this was not all. During the week, from four to eight members heard Mass every day; even at the time of the most urgent harvest work, two at least had to, as it were, represent the family there. What a loss of time, labor and earnings! And yet, it was remarkable, how wealth and well-being increased in that family from day to day. The children without exception were pious, obedient, innocent, the joy and consolation of their parents; four entered religious communities, and the father died a pious death, having attained an age of very nigh ninety years. —

Next to the farmer mentioned, there lived a neighbor who at first was just as wealthy and had only two children. On Sundays and Holy Days of obligation the four members of this family were seen in church only now and then, on week days never. The father was of opinion, that he and his wife and children had no time for such an indolent occupation as going to church, but had to work and increase their possessions. What happened? After a short time the homestead of this man was sold at a sheriff's sale; his son had to fly on account

of forging a draft, and the father was placed in the poor house! Be not surprised that your whole household should be on the decline, if you, O parents, and your children, after your example and through your fault, neglect Mass on Sundays. The curse of God weighs heavily on such a family!

Nor is the peril less of suffering complete shipwreck in religious matters to which you expose yourselves and your children. It has been truthfully observed, that the religious condition of a Catholic congregation can be gauged by the manner in which its members attend Mass on Sundays. The same applies to the individual families of which the congregation is composed. If parents, and, if children imitating their example, assist the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass regularly and devoutly, a truly Christian Catholic spirit will, on an average, be preserved and will manifest itself in the family. You can notice its gradual decline, if not in your own house at least all about you. And, as to the reason thereof, you have to seek and find it in the fact that parents and children culpably neglect Mass on Sundays.

But I have not yet done discoursing on the third commandment. The question, "How shall we sanctify Sunday?" is answered thus in the Catechism: "*We should above all hear Mass and, if possible, also attend the other services of the Church, especially the sermon and Christian doctrine.*" It is not my intention to-day to give a detailed explanation of this commandment and the duties it enjoins. I shall make mention of them only in as far as it may seem useful and advisable to impress on the mind

of parents the necessity of their good example, in order to fulfil these duties. This will serve as an additional practical explanation and application of what has been said heretofore on piety. (*Vide* 11th Sermon).

1. In the first place, let me say a few words on the so-called afternoon service on Sundays and Holy Days of obligation. Its beginning well nigh everywhere consists on Sundays in a catechetical instruction or Sunday school, which must be attended by every child for three years after First Communion. In a former sermon (17th) I have spoken to you more explicitly on the subject of Sunday school. Here I wish to repeat that the pains taken by us priests in behalf of your children during Christian doctrine are all in vain, if you, parents, do not second our efforts by word and example. The most efficacious support is that *of your example*, which you give when you yourselves are present at Sunday school either both together, or father and mother alternately. Your personal presence will contribute very much that your children may come regularly and at the right time, and, therefore, not suffer themselves to be led astray and to play truant about the street; that they behave in a becoming manner such as is required and befitting the house of God; that, indeed, they look beforehand at the few questions which shall be explained, so as not to be put to shame in your presence as ignoramuses. Already the interest which you manifest by your presence at Sunday school, will inspire the children with an interest and love for it, and thus insure success.

If children, however, know that their parents will never come, although they could easily do so; if they, as happens not seldom, even hear how father and mother remark, "Thanks be to God when the time of attending Sunday school shall be over; then you will be free of a Sunday afternoon": in a case of this kind there is no need on my part to draw any conclusion whatever as to such pitiable children in regard to their Sunday schooling. Why, you can grasp, if I may so say, the evil consequences with your hands. And yet, it would be undoubtedly of great advantage for parents themselves to be present at Sunday school quite often. For there they can learn still much they have never yet learned or understood, and can refresh much they have forgotten. And just *they* ought to be well up in catechism, even if it were only to be able to give the children an explanation and answer on all points that come up for discussion.

But what I say on this and subsequent subjects, is, I am well aware, all but a lost labor of love. We priests may preach and admonish and beseech as much and as urgently as lies in our power, after all, little or nothing will be done by people to become better. This, as is natural to human kind, makes a very discouraging impression on the heart of man, so that he often would exclaim: "Why shall I plague and bother myself? It does no good anyhow; things go on in the old rut!" But Isaias tells us (56, 10) not to be like *blind watchmen and dumb dogs.* We must tell the whole and full truth without exception, especially to parents and children. Thus at least we must try to save our soul

and leave the success and fruit of our words to the good will of our hearers and to the grace of God. Bearing this in mind let me say a few words at least on the subject of *Vespers*, or one or other *confraternity devotion*, which is sometimes held instead, and which almost everywhere follows after Christian doctrine and is brought to a close with *Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament*. The utility of these devotions, for instance of the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus on the first Sunday of the month, of the Bona Mors or the devotion to obtain a happy death on any other Sunday, cannot be denied by anyone who possesses still a vestige of Catholic feeling. And if I would undertake to say even only a word on the signification of Eucharistic Benediction, and, therefore, of that benediction which the Author of all blessing for time and eternity offers to, nay, forces, as it were, on the members of the congregation at the close of these devotions, it might seem as though I were addressing people who are not Catholics, who never have learned nor heard that Jesus Christ is present for them day and night in the Tabernacle, and that He would bestow precisely at these devotions through Sacramental Benediction for the coming week the richest blessings in abundance upon the entire congregation in general, and every family in particular. And now, let me ask, how many of your adult sons and daughters are present at Benediction? So few that the priest will not venture to mention the number! . . . . But why are there so few? Your own sons and daughters give the right answer when they say: "Our fathers and mothers never go, or,

at most but very seldom." This of course, explains the matter. In smaller as well as larger congregations there are certain parents, especially fathers, and, I am sorry to say, also mothers, with a large number of grown up children, who from one year's end to the other never come to the afternoon service or Benediction. The children follow their example. The young take after the old. However, the punishment for rejecting so many graces shall fall on both old and young in due time, with this difference only, that it will strike parents harder than their children!

2. Let me say yet an earnest word on *hearing the sermon*, which, as a rule, is delivered during High Mass. Here, also, I wish to consider only the example of parents with regard to their children who are just growing up. I only desire to say that it is *highly useful*, nay *morally indispensable* for these your children that they should hear the sermon as *regularly as possible*. Or do you really think they attain during the few years they spend in school or at Christian doctrine, a full and correct knowledge of the most necessary religious truths? We priests, but too often must be heartily glad if they only retain in their memory what is most essential, and if no erroneous ideas become rooted in their mind. A full understanding of religious truths is developed only after the lapse of years and is, under the influence of the illuming grace of the Holy Spirit, the result of often listening humbly to the sermon. And are you sure your children forget nothing of what they have learnt at school and during Christian doctrine? Just put a

few questions of the Catechism to your seventeen or eighteen-year-old sons and daughters! You will get answers as miserable as though they had forgotten whatever they learnt during the many years of school and catechetical instruction on Sundays. Many a priest's heart is filled with sadness when examining the candidates for marriage during the instruction preceding matrimony. It is necessary by all means to refresh and to add to what one has already learned, by attentively listening to the sermon on Sundays, especially in our own time when your children, often shortly after their first Communion, are cast out on a world of unbelief. Scoffs, sneers, misrepresentations of Catholic truth, clumsy jests at the expense of religious customs and practices are flung at them and fill the air everywhere.

But whence is help to come so that they may not lose their faith and, at the same time, be enabled to defend Catholic truth whenever necessary against the hydra-headed lie of unbelief? Consider for yourselves and your children the word of the Apostle: *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ* (Rom. 10, 17), that is to say, by means of the sermon. Reflect also on that other saying of Christ which is even more earnest (John 8, 47): "*He that is of God, heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God.*" Oh, what a terrible sight? More numerous than the leaves that fall from the trees in autumn, young men and young women when they are grown up fall away almost everywhere from their faith and from their church! How few, especially in

larger city congregations, are the families of whose grown up married or unmarried sons and daughters the Apostle could say even at the present day, that without exception they are *"rooted and built up in Jesus Christ, and confirmed in the faith as also they have learnt"* (Coll. 2, 7)? *And now remember, the beginning of this falling away is the neglect of the Sunday sermon.* Take an even number of let us say four-hundred young men and misses of fourteen years and upwards in any congregation. How many of these four-hundred, on an average, are at the sermon during High Mass and attend pretty regularly? Figuring liberally, about fifty. What are the remaining three-hundred and fifty doing in the meantime? Early Sunday mornings they are wont to pacify God, their conscience and their parents, who perhaps give them no rest, with hurriedly hearing a short Mass. (Nor is this much done by all). But what are the lads doing during the whole forenoon? They roam about the avenues or lounge around the street corners or sit together somewhere and play cards. And the girls with often two, three, four in one family? Are they all engaged cooking the dinner? Royal, indeed, would that banquet have to be which required so many cooks to prepare it! But no. Mother alone in her good-natured stupidity must look out for the dinner, and, for this very reason, hardly ever is present at the sermon. The daughters, conscious of their dignity, meanwhile make their toilet for an outing in the afternoon or evening either to the ball, or the theater, to this or that pleasure resort, or sway their lazy bodies back and forth in the

rocking-chair whilst reading pages that ought to suffuse their countenance with shame, that is, if they have any left.

Am I exaggerating? Then prove it, and I shall take back every word. But you cannot prove it. The reality is too palpable and confronts and surrounds you as a most sad fact. It is certain, that by far the greatest proportion of the rising generation of boys and girls, therefore of the youth in a congregation and consequently of the future parish, on an average and almost regularly does not hear a sermon on Sundays. And this, I repeat it, is the beginning of falling away from the faith. The darkness which envelops the mind increases: the vapor of passions in the heart grows denser; the persecutions on the part of Satan and the world become steadily more powerful. When the eighteenth, twentieth or twenty-second year has been reached, the awful day arrives on which the young man or the young lady exclaims: Away with the irksome ballast of religion! I desire to be free and unrestrained, unmolested and unencumbered by the tedious admonitions of aged parents and the priests. A marriage with a non-Catholic or with a fellow of whom they say "Religion, it is true, he has none, but otherwise he is a neat, polite young man and can get through life swimmingly"—or membership in a lodge forms the starting point of a tragedy, which, it is highly probable, unless a miracle of divine mercy should happen, will have its last act or rather its eternal continuation in the flames of hell!

I ask once more "Am I exaggerating?" If you

think so, just look about in some of the larger congregations, more especially in cities, and examine how many, or rather, how alarmingly few families you will find, in which still all the members of the first and second generation stand steadfast in the Catholic faith. *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ, through the sermon.*

Now who can render help? Who can heal this disease of our youth which has already become so wide-spread? Instead of this let me put another question: Who is to blame that your children do not hear the word of God anymore? Answer: In the first place, you, O parents; in the second place, all the adult members, especially the better situated ones who by missing High Mass and the sermon almost regularly, give a very bad example to the entire congregation, above all to the youthful portion thereof. Or, will children go regularly to the sermon at High Mass, if the father, the mother never go? It were a miracle. I know there are exceptions, that is to say, there are fathers and mothers who hear the word of God as regularly as possible, and yet their children do not. This is easily explained by other faults committed on the part of these parents in the education of their children, notably by a want of serious and effective authority in the matter of early punishment, and by a want of proper surveillance. However, the exception always confirms the rule, and the rule is: If the parents do not go, neither will the children go. Take one street after the other and you will find this verified in every Catholic congregation. Only if parents themselves hear the

sermon on Sundays as regularly as possible, will their children do the same and find therein an efficient means to gain strength and perseverance in faith.

There is another class of grown up members in a congregation, married and unmarried, who from levity, lukewarmness or a desire to be accounted high-toned, dispense themselves Sunday after Sunday from attending High Mass and the sermon. As the time is wanting, I can only yet place before them the words of our divine Saviour with an invitation to examine themselves seriously in regard thereto: "*He that is of God, heareth the words of God; therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God*" (Jno. 8, 47).

O my dear Christians! especially you, O parents, you are not heretics nor infidels! You have received the true faith. By means of the infallible doctrine of the Church the pure and unadulterated word of God is communicated to you, just as though you received it directly from the lips of Jesus. But just as a light or fire when once kindled, cannot be kept up and strengthened unless you add continually fresh material for consumption, so also you cannot preserve the light and warmth of divine doctrine except by a continued, regular hearing of the word of God. Do this for your own good, and unite all together, especially you, O parents, in order to edify the children and the youth of the congregation in a manner, which is at once beautiful and effectual. Thus alone is it possible that a healthy Catholic life will begin to throb in the heart of the individual and eventually pervade the entire congregation. Amen.

## 31. How parents are to set an Example by Observing the Fourth and Fifth Commandments.

In omnibus teipsum praebe exemplum bonorum operum.
Tit. 2, 7.

"In all things show thyself an example of good works."

In our last two discourses we selected from the first three commandments of God a number of points in regard to which parents must take especial pains to lead children onward on the way of salvation by the light of their good example. These three precepts state briefly and succinctly the relation of man to God, that is — his religious life. If mankind but fulfils these three commandments, it may be said to possess religion; if it fails to fulfil them, it does not possess any. Now, if also the children from their infancy learn to recite daily the necessary prayers according to the *example* which father and mother set them; if they learn to keep holy the Name of God and whatever has reference to God; if, by attending Mass regularly on Sundays and whenever it is possible, and by zealously hearing the Word of God, they learn to consecrate at least one day of the week, the Lord's day, in the fullest meaning of the word to the honor of God and the salvation of their soul,

the consequence is, that they will enter, as a matter of course, so profoundly and intimately into a truly religious Christian life, that no tempest on the part of hell, no attempt made by infidelity and heresy in the world, shall be able to divert them from the right path. But, if they see how parents set a bad example in one or other of the points mentioned, or, as in this case it often unfortunately happens, if they set a bad example in all the obligations of these three precepts, even should the evil example consist in a *mere omission*, for example of the necessary daily prayers, of Holy Mass and the hearing of the sermon on Sundays, the trunk of their tree of life shall soon be without roots, hollow and diseased interiorly to its very core. It may happen that this tree will still stand a couple of years and put forth a few leaves and buds, which display a semblance of religious life. But the time will not be long in coming when the storms of the world and passion which are raging already on all sides, shall snap, break and uproot it. Then the child, the young man, the maiden, eighteen, twenty, twenty-two years of age lies there prostrate on the ground—a fallen away Catholic—the right kind of fuel for the fire of hell!

Alas! poor parents, you who have learnt by sad experience and are still learning what I have expressed to you in feeble words! Your heart is nigh breaking; you weep and I feel like shedding tears with you. However, I beseech you, examine your conscience as to whether you are not guilty of sins of omission against the first three commandments, and thus of leading your children into the

abyss of religious ruin: repent and do penance and pray that the hand of the Almighty may again raise up what you have broken down. And do take it seriously, you and all parents without exception, with the fulfilment of these precepts and the exercise of our Holy Religion. Not what you *say* to your children, but what you *do*, is what they will do themselves. *What you are, the children will be.*

For your own and the benefit of the children we shall to-day consider the necessity of a good example on the part of parents in the most important points concerning the two commandments which follow.

1. You, O parents, possess a full and inalienable right to the *honor, love and obedience on the part of your children*. This threefold obligation is the *duty which children are obliged to perform in consequence of their state of life*, and, indeed, in such a manner, that according to the express word of God and constant experience, benediction and blessing shall be the portion of those who fulfil, whilst malediction and misfortune shall be the lot of those who fail to satisfy this duty.

*Do not, then, make its fulfilment more difficult by setting a bad, but render it easy by giving a good example.*

You ask: How so? Let me answer by asking you in reply a few brief questions. — In the first place, can you, O parents, expect that the children *will honor and love you, if you do not among yourselves and mutually honor and love each other?* If father and mother reproach each other, make known perhaps secret faults committed in youth; if they

scold, quarrel, wrangle, curse, even lay violent hands on each other and that often and repeatedly under the eyes and within the hearing of the children; if the little ones must hear how the mother proclaims before neighbors and relatives the faults of their father behind his back, or how the father pours out his heart to a good friend concerning the domestic cross which he has found in his wife; — if parents act in such a manner, have they a right to expect, that their children will respect and love them? No!—Mutual respect and love on the part of children towards each other, obtain for them necessarily also respect and love from their own children. The reverse proves fatal. Experience shows this everywhere.

Moreover, I ask: *How do you, O parents, treat your father and mother, I mean the grand parents of your children?* There are, alas, parents for whom their own parents evidently live too long, and who, even before their own children, let the aged father and mother feel that their death would be hailed with pleasure. Or, they speak in presence of their children about the faults and weaknesses of their parents, complain that they must support them, refuse even to give them any further support and refer them, as if they were beggars, to other relatives, or, even to strangers. And if the aged parents in one or other matter undertake to instruct, warn or admonish the young couple, the son and his wife or vice versa, as their youth and experience deserve, they usually receive an answer something like this: "Be still, you are too old-fashioned and silly; I know better what I am to do. Mind your own business and let us alone!"

All this and yet far worse their own children see and hear. Now is not such an example the most efficient school to promote stubbornness, unfilial conduct and disobedience towards parents? Be on your guard. There is no lack of examples which are exceedingly sad, to show that parents are punished for their sins against the fourth commandment *by their own children* in a most effective manner.

An aged father had, as is unfortunately often done in our own time,—transferred all his property to his eldest son who in return agreed to shelter and support his father until death. It did not last long, however, after the agreement had been made, when the aged parent got to feel the heartlessness of his son to its full extent. The grandfather was not permitted any longer to eat at the family table with the others; for as his hand trembled with feebleness, it was feared that he might beslobber the table cloth. Accordingly, he received his ration in a wooden bowl and had to eat it like a poor beggar in a nook behind the stove. One day the heartless son of this aged father observed how his own son, a boy of eight years, was busily engaged carving with hatchet and knife a sort of bowl out of a large board. "What are you doing there?" the parent asked his boy. "Father" replied the youngster, "I am making a bowl such as grandpa always uses, so that you may eat out of it when I once get big and you have grown old and feeble like grandpa!"

I will subjoin here a piece of advice which, directly, is most important for the preservation of

love and harmony that ought to exist between married children and their parents; and indirectly, for the education of their little ones. Should it at all be possible, it will be much better, if married sons or daughters after marriage, do not dwell and live together with their parents who may still be alive. As a rule, they remain good friends, visit each other and assist each other mutually by word and deed when they dwell apart and keep house separately. If they live together, however, then, in the first place, the different treatment accorded the little ones at the hands of their own parents and their grandparents will disturb and spoil the education of the children which ought to be uniform and conducted according to fixed principles. In such a case what is sown and planted on the one hand, is plucked up on the other. And what is still worse is this — the diversity of character and the infirmities and faults of impetuous youth on the one hand, and of peevish old age on the other, often cause friction and quarrels of greater or smaller extent. And, because all this generally happens before the eyes and ears of the little ones, it cannot fail to have a very detrimental effect on their bringing up! Now whether it be possible or impossible to follow this advice in every case, you must, Christian parents, reflect, that honor, love, and obedience toward your own parents, as long as they are still among the living, are the necessary example in order to educate your children to fulfil these same obligations towards your own selves. And this is still to be observed even when your parents are already among the dead. If your chil-

dren never hear you utter a word of love or gratitude towards the deceased grandparents; if they see how you, after shedding a few cheap tears at their death or burial, seize on their estate, large or small with joy and gladness, or, perhaps, amid envy and quarreling and fighting with brothers and sisters; if they notice that thereafter you have nothing left, not even so much as to have a few Masses said for the repose of their souls: then do not expect that your children after your death will treat you differently, that is to say, any better than you have acted towards your own parents and the grandparents of your children. I tell you beforehand, you shall weep and lament in purgatory perhaps for a very long time, exclaiming: "*Our own children have forgotten us!* What we have accumulated and saved, neglecting thereby the care of our soul and, consequently, becoming guilty of sin before God our sons and daughters are now enjoying on earth, leading a life of luxury. For us they have nothing left. We must burn. However, we have no right to complain. We have treated our parents in like manner. The example we have given our children has served to instil into them a selfish heartlessness." — If you do not wish one day to experience all this when it is too late to remedy it, take the necessary precautions in time and set them a good example also as to the observance of the fourth commandment.

Finally, let me mention still another important question as regards this same precept. Do you set your children a good example of *honor, love and obedience towards the Church?* The authority of the

Church over her children, because it is supernatural, is far higher and nobler than that of parents: her graces and blessings are much more precious and necessary than all you can bestow on your children. Would you, therefore, have your children heed your authority and respect, love, support you and afford you joy and consolation, show them by your example that you esteem *the Church as the true mother of* your supernatural life more than all else: that you recognize in her the authority of Christ: that you love the Church and are willing to aid her liberally in all her undertakings in which she stands in need of your material assistance, and, to be sure, not for herself, but for your and your children's welfare: that you cause her joy and comfort by leading a truly ecclesiastical life and do not obscure her holiness in the eyes of the world by a sinful, heathenish conduct. If you do all this, if your entire life be unto your children a living, efficacious encouragement to fulfil the duties they have as children towards their heavenly mother, the Church, then you may confidently expect that they will thereby take an example to discharge the obligation of the fourth commandment also towards yourselves. But if you do not do so: if there are parents — and alas there are such — who in presence of the children find fault with and scold about priests and church and their rules and regulations and impertinently consider themselves to be above the law of abstaining from flesh on Fridays and of attending Holy Mass on Sundays: who fling to their Mother the Church a few paltry pennies with which she is to build and support

places of worship and schools for the benefit of just such ungrateful parents and their children; who thereupon, by way of hateful insult, throw in a long strain of abusive language to the effect, that priests are always begging for money: if there are such parents, they set an example of which their children will fashion a scourge wherewith to lash the backs of their own parents one day. God grant that the insolence, disobedience and heartlessness which such parents shall surely meet with in their children, and much sooner than they expect, will cut them so deeply to the quick, that they may acknowledge and deplore the sins they themselves have committed against the Church, their Spiritual Mother!

Wherefore, dear parents, be on your guard! Remember you are good Christian parents only when you are kind children towards Holy Mother the Church. Your little ones will copy your conduct towards the Church in their behavior towards yourselves and become good and dutiful children.

2. As for the *Fifth Commandment*, strive above all to avoid, nay, repress entirely all envy, hatred, quarreling and strife with relatives and neighbors. Should children chance to be witnesses of such hateful passions, seeing and hearing again and again how they manifest themselves, their young hearts will be early embittered and filled with venom. As a rule, they espouse the quarrel of their parents. Now if these complain day after day of the injustice, the insults to which they were actually or only in imagination subjected by

brothers, brothers-in-law, neighbors or people in business, their children will do the same, because they are but too eager to identify themselves with the sentiments and interests of their parents. Thus the young as well as the old hearts of a family become impregnated with the dangerous poison of envy and hatred, which, by heredity, is transmitted to children and children's children. Thus entire generations are torn asunder and fall into enmity. The contentions of parents, grand and great grand parents become, as it were, a legacy and tradition during the life time of two or more families. All efforts to remind and persuade them of the great law of loving our neighbor and also our enemies prove unavailable. They imagine that if they were to become reconciled, the wishes and honor of their deceased parents and grandparents would be outraged. "Such and such parents and their children have offended *our* parents; therefore we cannot forgive them," they falsely conclude and thus seek to excuse themselves. The disaffection, the enmity becomes hereditary. Parental example has implanted the hateful sentiments too deeply in the hearts of children and poisoned, as it were, their very life blood. Such is especially the case when strife and dissension have lead to wearisome litigation which invariably proves detrimental to both parties. Children take an absorbing interest in the pending lawsuits. The final decision affects them most deeply. Gloating glee on the part of the winning, and deep-seated grudge on the side of the losing party will not die out so readily, but, as most mournful experience often shows, will last through many generations.

How totally different is the state of a family, where, in case they have been offended and really injured at the hands of others, the parents say: "Children, how often do we not all offend the good God! To Him we hope and pray, *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us.* Wherefore, we will, nay we must forgive. Moreover, such and such a neighbor or relative perhaps did not even mean it as badly as we thought. There has probably been some misunderstanding which will soon be cleared up. The words and actions of such and such have likely been falsely reported, disfigured, exaggerated by wicked tale bearers. In every case, let us follow the admonition of the Saviour: *Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven* (Matth. 5, 44–45)."

If you observe this, O Christian parents, the omnipotent Love of Jesus shall surely preserve you from temporal harm at the hands of evil-minded people, and — what is still far more important — the good example of peace and harmony, which you set your children, shall also serve to educate these to become peace-abiding Christians. In this manner you will insure to yourselves and your children, to your family, and, still long after your death, also to their families, the happiness and bliss which Jesus, the Heavenly Prince of Peace has promised and proclaimed in His sermon on the mount by uttering those beautiful words: *Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.* Amen.

## 32. On the Example which Parents are to give their Children by Observing the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Commandments of God and the Precepts of the Church.

In omnibus teipsum praebe exemplum bonorum operum.
Titus 2, 27.

"In all things show thyself an example of good works."

The thought of having led the children which God intrusted to them, back again to Him in heaven, will, as it should, constitute a considerable portion of the bliss of parents in eternity. Among the means to this end and, consequently, among the duties of a truly religious Christian education, perhaps the most important, the most efficacious, is a *good example*. Nor do parents need to ask long in what particular points they should light the way by a good example for their children. Our Divine Saviour gives them a very clear and definite answer in these words: *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments* (Matth. 19, 17). For, the observance of the precepts of God and the Church is precisely the only way leading to heaven. God's goodness towards us is so great, that He asks of us pilgrims on this earth for the time of our sojourn and preparation here below nothing else than what we are

to do eternally in heaven. *Love Me and love one another*, are, fundamentally, the only two requirements which He puts to us, thereby reminding us constantly of our godlike nobility and our heavenly destination.

Moreover, He condescended to explain this twofold precept of love in the Ten Commandments which He delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, thereby also showing its application to every day life. At the same time he pointed out the steps as it were, which parents must make before the eyes of their children, so that these may follow their footprints.

From this viewpoint solely, we adduced in our last discourses the most important points from the first five commandments. Let us conclude to-day with the precepts that follow, adding thereto still a few words on the commandments of the Church.

As regards the *sixth commandment* you must, O parents, be on your guard with great, I would say exceeding care, lest you say, do or permit anything in presence of your children which in the least might offend against *modesty*, that God-given guardian of holy innocence. Parents who in this respect become guilty, I will not say of sin, but only of an imprudence, cause an awful amount of harm among their children. There is no sin to which man is enticed at an earlier age more readily and so powerfully, than impurity. In consequence of original sin it is rooted, as it were, in flesh and blood; and the virtue of purity can be acquired and secured only by dint of a hard fight against the lust of the flesh. Now if children see or hear any-

thing immodest through the fault of their own parents, whom they look up to as their models, then modesty and the blush of shame will soon be lost. Sinful curiosity is awakened, juvenile fancy is filled with unchaste images, the voice of conscience is unheeded, base lust is sought after. Thus a child, when left to itself or in dangerous company with brothers and sisters who are equally unfortunate, or, when associating with playmates, can become already in its sixth, seventh or eighth year a slave of the most abominable sins, which, owing to frequent repetition, will but too readily take root as most pernicious habits.

Habitual sins against the sixth commandment but too often date back to the first days of childhood. For Satan, who is justly called the unclean spirit, steadily welds the shackles with which he enchains people in bondage still firmer until they become strong as steel and hard as adamant. The poor child, once it falls a victim to vice after having its attention directed and drawn to sin because of the example, or, perhaps only through the imprudence of parents, will bear these chains of enslavement throughout a whole lifetime, unless the powerful Lion of Juda, or the Valiant Woman, the Virginal Mother and Queen, shall break them asunder. Woe, woe, should it be held in fetters until death, only to be then dragged down into the sulphurous pit of eternity! Seeing its parents near by, it will call to them everlastingly: "You, — not parents I will call you, but murderers — you have brought me by your example into this abyss!"

On the contrary, if children do not see or hear

on the part of parents even the least shadow of unbecoming words and actions; if they become aware of the fact that their parents are genuine paragons of purity in keeping with their state of life and models of behavior, such as befits Christians who walk here upon earth in the presence of God and are desirous of becoming companions of the angels in heaven: then such an example will fill their tender heart with an aversion for every species of impurity, while it will inspire them also with a high esteem for the virtue of holy innocence. At the least temptation, arising either from within or without, they will exclaim: "Were I to consent, what would my good parents say? Away, then, with this smut!" And thus, as the history of many juvenile saints goes to show, chaste parents will have chaste children,—but, also, *honest* parents, *honest* children. In school as well as in church; children learn that God, in His goodness, has taken all and every kind of property belonging to our neighbor under His especial protection; and, indeed, so that He punishes not merely in eternity every kind of theft, cheating, malicious damage, even the retention of things found and the culpable non-payment of debts contracted, but that He even disposes and directs all things in the present life, so that an unjust penny shall devour an ill-gotten dollar.

Nay more, they hear and learn that sins against the seventh commandment of all transgressions, are the most foolish, because they are of no profit whatever, for the simple reason, that the ill-gotten goods must be restored, or else every thought of God's forgiveness must be relinquished.

Now let us suppose that children see their parents acting day by day in accordance with this incontrovertible truth. Not a penny of ill-gotten goods will they suffer in the house. In all their dealings, both as to measure and weight, they are honest, even to the smallest amount. If anything should be found, they inquire themselves, or, through others, for the person to whom it belongs, and restore it promptly, or apply it to some pious purpose in case it is impossible to find the rightful owner. Should they have to borrow anything, they handle it with care, as if it were their own and return it at the right time. Even though they be in need and necessity they will manage to pull through honorably, albeit pinched by want, rather than seek unlawful alleviation in ways that are crooked. The negligent making of debts is something of which they never are guilty. If necessity and misfortune have brought them into indebtedness, they are ill at ease and will save, and suffer want, until their debts be paid. Now what will become of the children who grow up under the influence of such examples of honesty and probity? They are gradually rooted in a healthy sense of right and justice, of a perfect keeping sacred the property of their neighbor; and this sentiment, as a rule, will hold them aloof from the numberless paths of deceit and fraud during the balance of their lifetime. If, on the contrary, children live to see how their parents are not particular as to the "mine" and "thine," because, as they try to excuse themselves in presence of their offspring, other people are not so honest either, and because nowadays

one cannot get on in the world otherwise; if children notice that parents retain for themselves, for instance, things, which were found, without making any inquiry as to the owner, or that if their children have found anything, they do not oblige or hold them to return it; that they readily and often borrow of their neighbors one thing or another, but forget just as readily to return it; that, for the sake of show and pleasure, they unnecessarily make great expenses far in excess of their station and financial ability, and then have nothing left to pay the tailor and shoedealer, the butcher and baker, rent and groceries; that they even then scold and clamor about impudence, importunity and the like, should merchants and mechanics insist on final payment of bills long overdue; that in such a case they even remove very quietly from one nook of the city to another far away, in order simply to defraud their old creditors and to obtain a fresh credit among new business establishments to whom they are as yet unknown: in a word: if children have occasion to observe in their own parents the evil example of sins committed against the seventh commandment, the proverb will very soon be verified in such a family to the effect, *that pippins never fall far from the trunk on which they grow.* In some large cities there are schools, or, rather dens where young people are professedly taught and exercised in stealing and cheating. Such haunts are suppurating sores on the body of human society.

But among the sores which are still worse, those families are to be classed, in which parents, by their bad example, instil into children, not the exterior

skill, but rather the interior propensity to steal. And, sad to say, there are melancholy cases enough to show that disposition and bent to theft and fraud are transmitted by heredity to children and children's children. Hence, people hearing that so and so has been found guilty of stealing or cheating usually whisper to one another, No wonder; the parents at home have set the example. It is true that such may not always be the case.

Should you, therefore, hear of thefts or frauds committed by sons or daughters, beware of rash judgment and recall to your mind the words of the Divine Saviour: "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned" (Luke 7, 37). The heart of the parents, to whom such unfortunate children belong, is already most painfully wounded by the misdeeds of their offspring. Wherefore, do not cause the measure of their pain and anguish to run over by passing judgment uncharitably and, perhaps, altogether unjustly. For, even the children of thoroughly honorable parents may succumb later on to the countless temptations of dishonesty. These, however, in the present as also in every other case, are sad exceptions to the general rule, viz., that children grow to be what their parents are and what the parental example leads them to become.

The same holds good in regard to the *eighth precept*, which is the last we have to consider among the Ten Commandments, — as the ninth and tenth coincide with the sixth and seventh. When discussing the duty of punishing children, I already told you that you must do so especially when you

catch them telling a lie. For, not only are "*lying lips an abomination to the Lord*," but, what is of still greater importance to the whole work of education, lying spoils also the entire character of the child, especially so, should it become an habitual sin. The character grows oblique, as it were, hypocritical, deceitful, and is not to be trusted either in human or divine affairs. But, let me also ask here, what good does it do to punish, if children, cunning as they are, observe how father tells lies to mother and mother to father, and how both palm off evident untruths on their children, and that parents, in their intercourse with fellow mortals, are frequently guilty of being hatefully double-tongued? It will not be long when these children begin to tell lies to their parents. Then both parties may vie with each other as to who can lie best. Faith, confidence, love, sincerity, will be destroyed in that case, and at the same time the moral-religious basis of family life will be ruined. On the contrary, if children find out that their parents always follow the rule of the spiritual Saviour, "Let your speech be yea, yea; no, no" (Matth. 5, 37), their life also will become imbued with a plain, trustworthy truthfulness, pleasing alike to God and man, and be preserved from very many and most fatal consequences.

Still worse than the example of mendacity is that of *detraction and calumny*. But where are the parents to be found, who never in presence of their children rate neighbors, friends and acquaintances, calling into suspicion and putting an evil construction on their words and actions, even their inner-

most sentiments and wishes, and making old women's gossip the subject of conversation at table or during recreation? And yet, detraction and slander constitute either a grievous or venial sin, in as far as there is question of a grievous or slight fault of our neighbor. Thus the children of a family, in which parents render themselves guilty of such sins, grow up in the midst of a sinful atmosphere. Christian parents! Ponder well; the fact that lying, detraction and calumny are, sad to say, so universally propagated, does not furnish you with an excuse to disregard them. On the contrary, you are bound only the more to warn against them and to inflict a punishment in case of necessity; you must still more accustom your children by your example to be on their guard against these sins of the tongue with so much greater care, the greater the evil is which these sins occasion so often, and the more they are opposed to the law of charity.

As for the *Commandments of the Church*, I scarcely need to direct your attention to them. Concerning the *sanctification of Sundays and Holy Days*, especially by assisting at Holy Mass devoutly and listening attentively to the sermon as regularly as possible, we have already spoken when treating of the third commandment of God. Do not forget that from the observance of these precepts one can arrive at an estimate of the moral-religious standing of a people. See to it, especially by your example, that your family, your children be not entirely carried away by the whir and stir of the world, so that at least once in the week they may

become conscious, that, after all, everything here below is vanity excepting to love, to serve, to seek God. The Church, kind and loving mother that she is, has reduced the law of fasting and abstinence to such a degree of mildness, that nowadays perhaps the great majority of Christians who must gain a daily livelihood in the world by hard work for the most part, are dispensed from the observance of the fast properly so called. Nevertheless, keep strictly the prescribed abstinence which is to be observed on Fridays and on a few other days in the course of the ecclesiastical year. By so doing you always set the children an example of obedience towards the Church and of love for the Crucified Saviour, and these are two virtues, which become only the more necessary for your children during life, as the world neither knows nor practices them.

Concerning Confession and Communion at Eastertide, I shall not say a word; for parents who neglect also this duty, sever all connection with the tree of life and become dried up branches, not giving life to, but only bringing death on their children. Wherefore, Christian parents, *show yourselves in all things an example of good works.* In a hurried glance at the Ten Commandments I have drawn your attention to the most important points, in which an *evil* example on your part would have a very pernicious influence on the children and prove to them a veritable scandal; while a *good* one is absolutely necessary in order to advance them on the road which these commandments mark out as being the only path that leads to heaven, No

doubt, you all wish to go to heaven; thither also you wish to lead back your children. Therefore, keep the commandments. Whatever your circumstances may be, see to it that you can say to your children what the Divine Saviour tells to all of us when He exclaims: *I have given you an example, that as I have done, so you do also* (John 13, 15). True, this is difficult; for the duty of giving children a good example day after day, compels you to keep a watchful eye on your conduct so as never to become remiss, but, in a word, to be ever zealous in the work of your own salvation.

Eternal happiness, however, along with the consciousness that your children, when they are united with you in heaven, owe this same bliss to you, shall be your reward exceedingly great. Amen.

## 33. Weal or Woe that awaits Parents and Children in Time and Eternity — the Result of a Good or Evil Bringing up.

Quae seminaverit homo, haec et metet. Gal. 6, 8.

"What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap."

With to-day's discourse we shall finish our series of sermons on the great art of educating children. The purpose animating me, I might say in every word and sentence, was but a desire of sincerest love towards parents. It was to show them, by making clear to their mind the many duties and obligations which the art of education involves, what they have to do even to the smallest detail, and what to avoid in order to insure to their children a good Christian education, and thus make them happy for time and eternity.

Once they have become parents by the power and grace of God, they must say to themselves — "Now, after providing for the temporal welfare and advancement of our children, we have but one more great task in our life to fulfil, which is to conduct them back to the Father in Heaven who has entrusted them to our keeping. We must, therefore, start them out on the way to heaven, *by instructing them in religion and piety;* we must preserve

them from going astray from the right road, by *constant watchfulness;* we must urge them forward on the path of virtue by *punishing them* in a deserved, and yet loving manner; finally, we must draw them onward by *setting them a good example.*" These obligations may be summed up in but four words; yet, each of them contains, as it were, a whole world of worry and trouble and responsibility! And what is most important and, therefore, constitutes precisely the strongest motive, is this: *from the fulfilment or nonfulfilment of the fourfold duty just mentioned, there depends,* as we shall see to-day, *the temporal and eternal happiness or misery — 1. of the children, and 2. of the parents.*

1. Owing to the feeling of affection which God has implanted into their heart, parents are urged, nay, compelled to provide for the temporal and eternal well-being of their children. But now how do you care for their *temporal welfare* in the best manner? Perhaps by laying by for them as much money and real estate as possible? I knew a father of a family who left to each of his nine children a separate house, a well-established business and besides several thousand dollars in cash. To accumulate all this, he had been working and saving during an entire life time. On the first anniversary of his death, however, his children did not even have so much left, as to get a Mass said for the repose of his soul; and, after the lapse of two or three years, they were all broken and ruined financially. — My dear parents, you certainly shall provide for the temporal welfare and advancement of your children, as I have heretofore shown you.

But remember, also in regard to the temporal possessions of this life the words of Sacred Scripture obtain: "*Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it*" (Psalm 126, 1).

Faith, religion, virtue, piety are the indispensable pillars for temporal happiness. Wherefore, bring up your children to acquire and practice these good qualities, and you will make them happy even temporally, in as far as this is good for them and can be attained during the time of probation here below. Parents who did not bequeath a penny to their children, but who managed to give them a good Christian education, have provided for their temporal welfare in the best manner. On the other hand, parents who have neglected to do this, but who are in the habit of boasting and consoling themselves with the fact that they have succeeded in leaving to their children a goodly portion of earthly lucre, shall yet moan and groan in the tomb, — "alas, how unhappy we have made our children!"

The principal care of your love as parents must regard the *eternal welfare* of your children. Your watchword ought to be — "*From heaven have I received these children; back again to heaven will I lead them.*" Therefore, your life's task is Christian education, whose four chief obligations we have hitherto explained in detail. If you have imparted a Christian education from earliest infancy to your children, you need not entertain any misgiving as to their eternal welfare. But, if you have neglected to do this, there remains but little hope for the future. For, here those words of the Holy Ghost

find their full application: *A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.* (Prov. 22, 6). Oh, that all parents would well ponder on the influence, which a Christian education exercises over children during tender infancy and youth and which is so all-decisive as to their lot in eternity!

But alas, — the thought often obtrudes itself to the mind of the priest, when dealing with depraved boys and girls, that in them the parents have torn down what Church and school had built up; and, hence, in such a case the parents, and not the children, ought to be punished. This, at least, was the meaning of a law framed by Lycurgus of Sparta, to the effect that if the boy committed any crime the father was to be punished, if the girl went wrong the mother had to be chastised, and that, too, in the public market place. And, though the laws enacted by men nowadays are not so severe, the truth, nevertheless, is patent from experience, that the evil which in tender infancy has once struck root in children, will, like rampant weeds, continue to spread farther and farther. Death at last, — eternity puts a mournful end to its exuberant growth. According to the tremendous words of St. Cyprian, such children shall then exclaim in the flames of hell: *Not we have been the cause of our perdition but the faithlessness of our parents is to blame. Our parents have murdered us in our infancy.*

Do you wish to preserve your children from this woful calamity? Are you desirous, on the contrary, to insure to them eternal happiness, then give them early a good Christian training. As a rule, they will remain good thereafter.

And should they also without your fault, in spite of prayer and watchfulness on your behalf, go astray, owing to evil association, the grace of God can convert them much more readily by reason of the good bringing up they have received. It is no unusual occurrence that the priest sometimes succeeds in regaining unto God and heaven some exceedingly hardened sinner by simply putting him with a few words in mind of a good father, a pious mother and the blissful days of innocent childhood.

Being filled, then, with an ardent desire to render the children happy in time and eternity, you must exert your every nerve and energy to impart to them a good education, a good bringing up. And this you ought to do only the more willingly, as

2. the *temporal and eternal weal or woe in your own case depends on the Christian education of your children.* Children who are well brought up and imbued with Christian principles are already in this world the honor and joy, the true happiness of their parents. On the contrary, children whose bringing up has proved a failure, are such a source of worriment and unhappiness to their parents, as to make it impossible for them to enjoy any other true blessing in this life.

There in a miserable hut I see a poor couple; father and mother are surrounded by a large number of children. I find them all seated around a bare table containing a very scanty meal. Yet it seems to me as though the three little pictures of Jesus, Mary and Joseph — suspended on the barren wall above the table, were shedding bright rays of peace

and happiness over all the inmates and inundating their hearts with sweet contentment. Shall I ask the parents, "Are you not poor, unfortunate?" With beaming countenance they reply, "*Oh no, we are rich and happy; for we possess well-behaved, good children. Our children are our joy, our honor, our wealth!*" — Let us enter another house. It is the mansion of a millionaire. Here also we find the family, consisting of father, mother and only two children, son and daughter, seated at table which is abundantly supplied with all that is calculated to tempt the palate. Accidentally they are just without company and, consequently, minus that delusive mask beneath which the rich and high-toned of this world contrive to hide from the eyes of their fellow men the innermost pang usually gnawing at their heart. What do we see there? The food is not relished by any one of them! Deep furrows line the forehead of the father, tears suffuse the eyes of the mother; bold impertinence is expressed on the face of the son: a weary feeling of languor is noticeable in the jaded frame of the daughter. The meal is not yet finished, before a fierce storm of denunciation breaks loose, consisting of reproaches for the degenerate son, the good-for-nothing daughter and capped with the charge, "*You are the cause of our misfortune, our disgrace! You will bring us prematurely into our grave!*"

Poor unhappy, unfortunate parents without consolation, because conscience tells them that their children have become a failure through their own fault, because they neglected to bring them up in a truly Christian manner!

Education, or the bringing up of children, may be likened to the seed, which is sown. In proportion as the training of the little ones is attended to in a good or evil, Christian or non-Christian manner, parents shall reap from the conduct of their children, already in this life, the purest joy, the greatest happiness, or, may be, on the other hand, the most bitter disappointment and misery which will render the enjoyment of every other temporal blessing impossible.

One single degenerate son, one only good-for-nothing daughter not unfrequently causes parents, even though these be honored and respected and ever so well situated as to temporal goods, such a degree of unhappiness, that nobody would exchange with them. If this be so as to time, how will it be in eternity!

Awe-inspiring are the words of Jesus: *He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea* (Matth. 18, 6).

Now for children almost every neglect of the numerous educational duties incumbent on parents, especially every evil example, is an almost unfailing source of scandal, and one that will affect the entire life of the little ones. Hence, experience shows that it is easier to convert heathens and infidels and lead them to heaven, than children who have been brought up badly. If the fountain head be poisoned, nothing short of a miracle of Divine Omnipotence can cleanse the water of the brook or river and make it wholesome. And what will be

the consequence if, through the fault of the parents, childhood and with it youth and old age, should be spoiled? Origen says plainly: *Whatever the children have done wrongfully will be set down to the account of parents, who have failed to train and discipline them.* And St. Isidore looking into eternity, exclaims: A great many parents lose eternal salvation precisely and solely because *they* are to blame that their children are spoiled and go to eternal ruin.

Now imagine such parents in particular judgment before God. But a single moment, and they obtain a comprehensive view of all the misery and misfortune they have caused. Thereupon they exclaim, "Through our own fault have our children lost the treasure of faith and trodden the path of sin. Now they are and will remain what we have made of them." "Thus it is!" — the Guardian Angels and patron saints will cry out. "Thus it is!" Mary, our heavenly Mother will exclaim. "Thus it is!"—the demon as the accuser of parents before the tribunal of God, will scream. "Thus it is!" Jesus, too, the Judge, will say approvingly. "I had sacrificed my life for your children; but you murdered them! Therefore soul for soul! Down into hell!" — And there, thrown together with their children, they are cursed and tormented by them as by so many furies. Woe, woe! This is hell with double and treble vengeance. And this kind of a hell is the portion of parents who have neglected to bring up their children in righteousness!

Christian parents! Most serious are these thoughts, most terrible these truths. It will not

do to discard them negligently from your mind. Face the duties and grave responsibilities which every infant's soul, entrusted to your care, binds on your conscience, and look them fairly and squarely in the eye! If you have committed blunders heretofore in the work of training your children, perhaps more from ignorance and want of reflection, than through malice and intent, be sorry for it, sue for pardon, conjure the Sacred Heart of Jesus to atone for your faults and mistakes. But then, also, take the firm resolution all of you, to the effect that you will do better than heretofore, that you will instruct, watch over, punish your children and lead the way for them with a good example. Such is the great mission and task of your life. True, it is difficult, very difficult. Your unceasing prayer, however, shall implore strength and benediction from heaven: and, as to perseverance, you will find its motive in the frequent consideration that for yourselves peace, rest and happiness *in time and eternity* depend on a faithful discharge of this your mission.

Father, mother! Imagine you are stretched on your *deathbed*. Your eyes with a glazed look are turned towards heaven. It seems to you as though celestial forms of light glided down from the realms above and hovered about you, beckoning to you with friendly mien. Do you not recognize them? They are the souls of children whom you have sent ahead to the mansion of your Heavenly Father. On the day when they died as innocent children or as grown up young men or maidens,—piety-loving and God-fearing, just as you had brought them

up — their death inflicted a deep wound on your heart. But this wound soon healed, thanks to the balm of filial submission to God's Holy Will, and thanks to the glad trustfulness which assured you that the children, having died so young and innocent, were saved, saved and happy in the bliss of heaven. Now they appear to you being charged by the Heavenly Father to meet you and to become united with you throughout all eternity!

And what about your *surviving children?* You see them assembled around your bed. One after another you motion to them to draw near you. For the last time you address to them a few words of consolation with failing voice. For the last time you impose your trembling hand on their head and bless them. True, you feel and they feel the pang of parting. But, as if your eye already caught a glimpse of the bright realms of heaven, you still find strength to console your children amidst their sobbing and wailing by saying to them: Weep not; I go to Him who is my and your Father. Pray for me. Remain good children. Persevere in the path which I have shown you by word and example. But a short while, and you will follow me; and then we all shall remain united up there in the cloudless, never ending bliss of eternity.

Oh, do you not wish, Christian parents, that you might die such a death? If so, perform now in life what you will wish to have done one day at the hour of your death. Do not weary in fulfilling most faithfully the duties to which the work of education obliges you in conscience. After you have died a happy death, you shall not be sepa-

rated entirely from your children; but you shall continue to live in their love and grateful remembrance. Repeatedly shall you witness from your place in heaven, how your children here below, will speak lovingly of you, recalling your words and good example and resolving not to occasion you any pain, but joy, even though you be in eternity. You shall be witnesses how your children, in the education of their own children, will follow your example, and thus you shall have the satisfaction of seeing the good seed which you have sown and matured, bring forth most abundant fruit throughout generations and generations.

All this, however, is only an accidental reward of your pains and anxieties. *The chief and principal reward you shall receive in heaven.* Numberless are the degrees of celestial bliss. Each one of them is an immeasurable good, as it introduces the soul into a higher and deeper knowledge and love of God and lasts for all eternity. Whoever succeeds in saving only his soul shall receive his full merit for the work done, that is to say, the eternal crown of victory for the combat bravely fought. But whoever, along with his own soul, also saves others, more especially those entrusted to his particular care by Almighty God, Who leads man by the agency of man, such a one is a true co-laborer of Jesus Christ in the truly divine work of bringing about the eternal salvation of souls. He is credited, as it were, with every soul that he saves. Hence the angel says to the prophet Daniel (12, 3): *They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity.* To save souls, is the work of the

noblest and sublimest charity towards our neighbor; and, at the same time, it is genuine love of God. Such a love, my dear Christian parents, you exercise day after day, hour by hour, nay throughout many years, whenever you discharge faithfully and conscientiously the duties of education towards your little ones. The degree of eternal bliss shall correspond to the degree of warmth, strength and duration of the actual love which you have shown your children.

No doubt, at the time of the particular judgment, when the hour of death shall have arrived, the all-seeing, all-holy eyes of God will detect in your life many weaknesses and defects; but, then also the words shall be fulfilled: *Charity covereth a multitude of sins* (1. Pet. 4, 8). And if the guardian angels and the patronal saints of your children can testify in your behalf that your love never permitted you to desist from praying for the Christian education of your offspring and from being ever watchful, solicitous and painstaking for their welfare; if your conscience, if Satan himself cannot bring any grave charges against you on this score, then will the Judge turn to you with benignity and mildness and say: Come, O good and faithful parents! *Whatsoever you have done to your children, you have done to Me.* You have been faithful not over few and insignificant, but over many and great things, — faithful in the care of the immortal souls of your children, whom I have redeemed with my Blood and entrusted to your care. Now I shall place you over many things. Enter into the joy of the Lord. Amen.

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